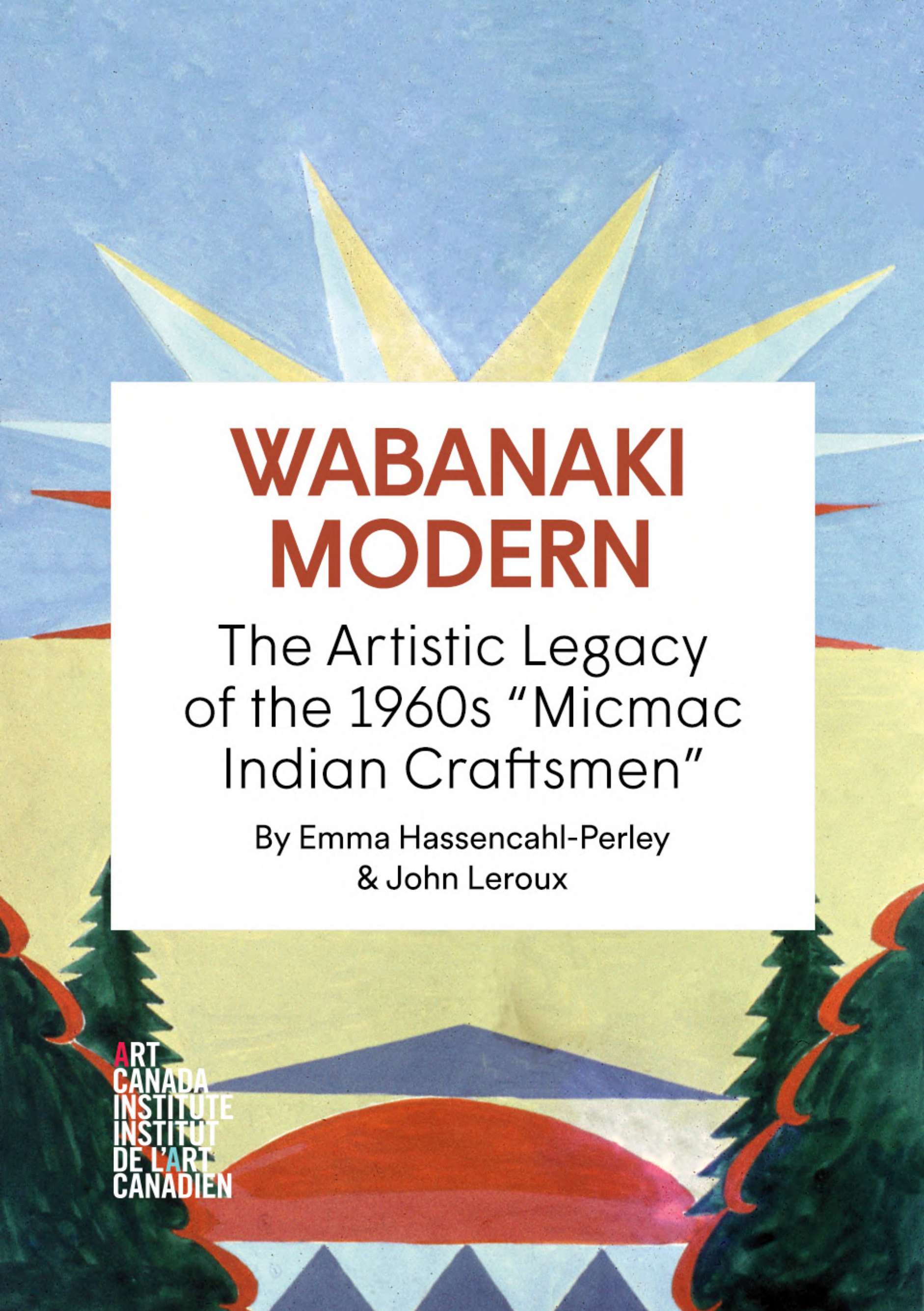

WABANAKI MODERN

The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsmen"

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FOREWORD

For Indigenous Peoples across Canada and the contiguous United States, the 1960s was a time of emergence. In Canada, after generations of confinement on reserves by the colonial government through the draconian Indian Act of 1876, an example of cultural genocide that remains a legal and binding document today, the post-war years saw a new, more confident generation emerge. Changes to the Indian Act in 1951—including lifting the ban on Sundances and Potlatches, and the ability for communities to pursue land claims against the government—meant that the late 1950s and early 1960s witnessed the re-emergence of Indigenous artists, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis alike.

THE LEGEND OF GLOOSCAP'S DEPARTURE
The time had come for Glooscap to leave his people. He told them that he was going far to the west and that he would some day return to them, and that life then would return to the old ways.
He turned over his hugh cooking pot and it is now Spencers Island in the Bay of Fundy. He also turned his dogs to small stone islands and they now guard the entrance to Chignecto Bay.
Design and legend by Michael Francis
Screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove Reserve, Kent Co., N. B.
Card No. 24
Printed in Canada

Michael Francis, *The Legend of Glooscap's Departure*, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

Examining culture and history through photographs, art, or written text prompts us to ask whether we would consider our ancestors modern and how did they come to accept the influences of new materials and ideas. The idea of being modern—absorbing new ideas and thinking in different ways—was likely not on the minds of the post-war generation. The impact of residential schools, a key tool in the cultural genocide carried out by the colonial government, meant that education had been weaponized and had become an effective mechanism for erasing Indigenous memory. Any reference to Indigenous history was more than likely expressed through the overdetermined and ideologically driven lens of Hollywood films, or through the interests of anthropologists who repeated their unconscious biases and reinforced assumptions of hierarchy. When I view documentation from this period, I see a changing world with little or no Indigenous cultural life.

By contrast, I would suggest that post-contact Indigenous artists, everywhere, enjoyed relative freedom of expression. Whether their art was for community purposes or trade with outsiders, these artists generally had strong cultural communities and their artistic expression reflected this strength. They were confident in the face of external forces intent on changing their way of life. I caution, however, that Indigenous people were also experiencing rapid population decline because of foreign diseases and they were having to give up their traditional territories through treaties; but, from a cultural perspective, artists were benefitting by readily incorporating new materials and ideas into their work. They may not have been creating works of art like Europeans or Euro-Americans, but they were contemporary with all that was going on around them. They were free to be their own unique form of modern. After all, being modern is about new ways of thinking and absorbing ideas.

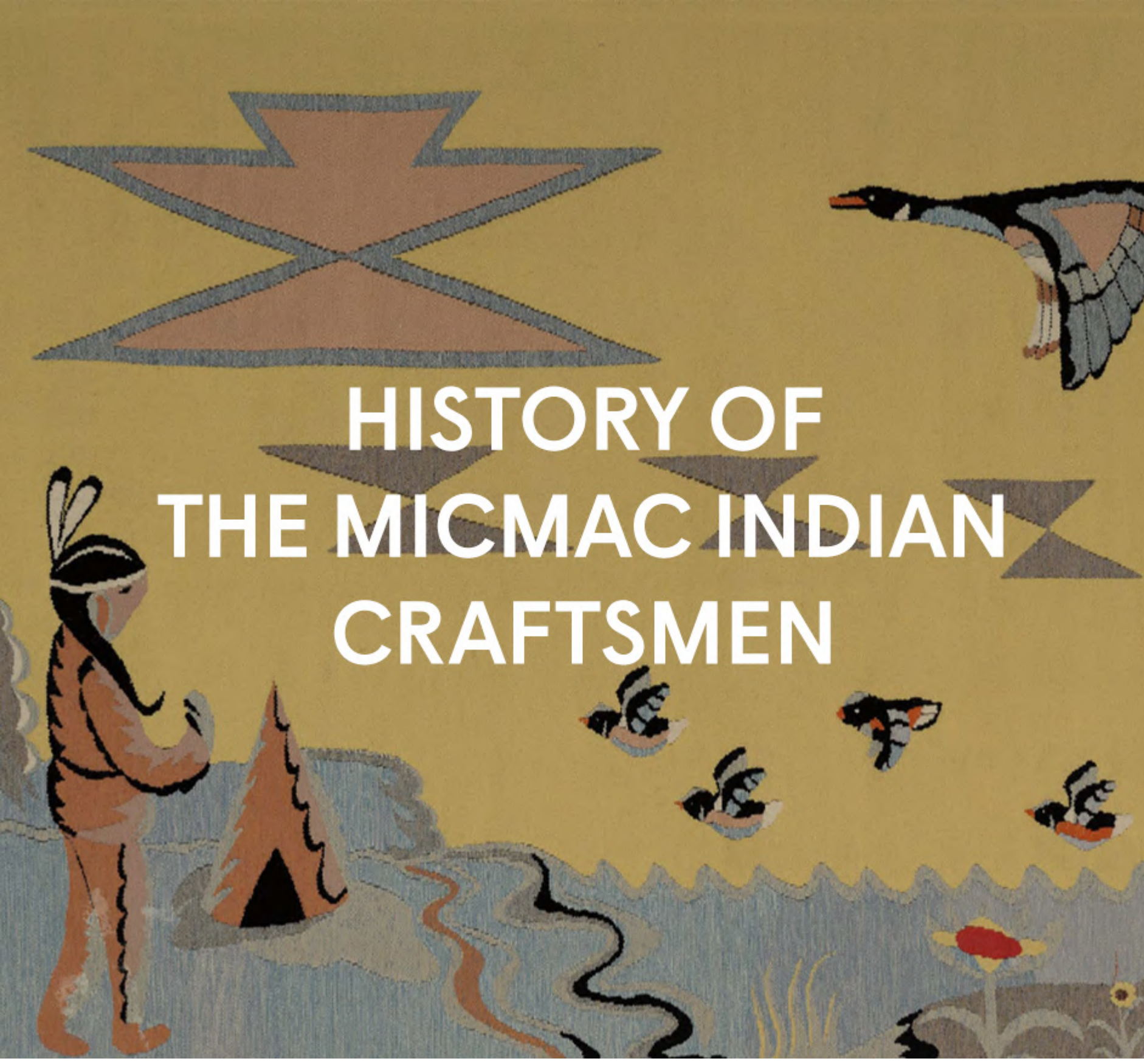
Michael Francis, *The Micmac Legend of Our Seasons—the Summer Queen Meets the Winter King*, 1963, gouache on paper, 73 x 52 cm, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

It was during the Indian Act period that all this changed and Indigenous artists were restricted to participating in the new capitalist economy. The proceeds from sales of their work were considered making a living in the eyes of the government—in other words, it was legitimate. But Indigenous artists could not create art for their own reasons, which is to say for cultural and ceremonial purposes, and were forced instead to depend on the market economy. In Wabanaki'k / Atlantic Canada, this often meant relying on basketry sales to make a living, continuing a longstanding tradition and facilitating generative opportunities that continue today. Maintaining older practices while engaging in modern lifestyles enabled creative communities to pass on links to their Indigeneity to succeeding generations by coding traditional visual knowledge into market economy items.

LEFT: Indigenous basket weaver sitting beside a stack of baskets, 1951, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. RIGHT: Basket by Sandra Racine (Elsiogtog First Nation), c.2014.

Which brings me to *Wabanaki Modern*. Importantly, this book illuminates a post-war/post-reserve period when Indigenous Peoples everywhere had begun shaking off cultural atrophy. While knowledge keepers were far fewer and ceremonial life had largely been replaced by Christianity, certain pursuits, such as basketry, remained a distinctly local endeavour. The embedded and relational codes that evaded assimilation helped to support the resurgence of language and stories. These preserved communicative methods inspired the "Micmac Indian Craftsmen," who worked out their own visual knowledge. The following essay describes an important new, openly modern chapter in the Indigenous visual knowledge of this land. Influenced by Western art and drawing upon the memories of an Indigenous past, the generation of the "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" succeeded in rewriting the possibilities of modernity. Looking back, it seemed easy for them to accomplish this task, because Indigenous Peoples needed only to remember their past to become the future.

Gerald McMaster
Professor, OCAD University
Director of Wapatah Centre for Indigenous Visual Knowledge



HISTORY OF THE MICMAC INDIAN CRAFTSMEN

Between 1962 and 1967, the Mi'kmaw artists of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) transformed a small community workshop into one of Canada's most dynamic Indigenous art co-operatives. Led by Michael Francis (1923–1995) and Stephen Dedam (1938–2022) under the guidance of Ivan H. Crowell (1904–2003), a key figure in the professionalization of craft in New Brunswick, they mastered weaving, silkscreen printing, painting, and pottery, producing handmade works sold across North America. Their bold fusion of modern design and traditional knowledge captured national attention. Yet, despite their success, federal funding cuts abruptly ended the enterprise.

What remains is a remarkable legacy of creativity, collaboration, and cultural resilience that has been long overlooked.

For a brief moment in the 1960s, the focus of contemporary art shifted in Atlantic Canada. No longer was it fixated on Saint John and painters like Miller Brittain (1912–1968), Jack Humphrey (1901–1967), and Fred Ross (1927–2014). Nor on Mount Allison University in Sackville where Alex Colville (1920–2013) had recently left teaching to paint full time, and where Lawren P. Harris (1910–1994) was developing his austere language of sharp coloured lines. Nor the rural studio of Christopher (1935–2022) and Mary Pratt (1935–2018) in Salmonier, Newfoundland. While these artists and others were all part of the burgeoning visual arts landscape in eastern Canada, for however briefly the media and the art world's attention was captured by an unexpected group of artists working as members of a vibrant co-operative experiment in avant-garde art that flourished from the early to mid-1960s at Elsipogtog (then known as Big Cove), a First Nations community in Kent County, New Brunswick.

Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964, wool (handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell), 122 x 160 cm, University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton.

They called themselves the "Micmac Indian Craftsmen." They were the first modern Indigenous artists in Atlantic Canada, and they developed an international following almost overnight. Their work was inspired by traditional Wabanaki stories, but their visual language was eclectic, often minimalist, and unabashedly contemporary. Having left almost no trace in the current canon of New Brunswick visual art or Indigenous studies, it is staggering to see how intense and promising the studio's work once was. What makes their accomplishments even more remarkable is that these makers and designers were primarily self-taught. What they did possess, however, was an intrinsic understanding of craftsmanship, patience, and a desire to make their mark in material culture based on traditions and stories older than Western art itself.

Origins in Big Cove

For New Brunswick's First Nations communities, the mid-twentieth century was often a hard time tainted with injustice and inequity. Housing conditions on reserves were marginal at best, and status Indians only gained the right to vote in provincial elections in 1963. Employment opportunities beyond intermittent labour were rare, and income levels were a fraction of those in the white population. In 1964, the average life expectancy of an Indigenous person in

Canada was half that of the average Canadian.[1] Big Cove was statistically among the poorest reserves in the country.

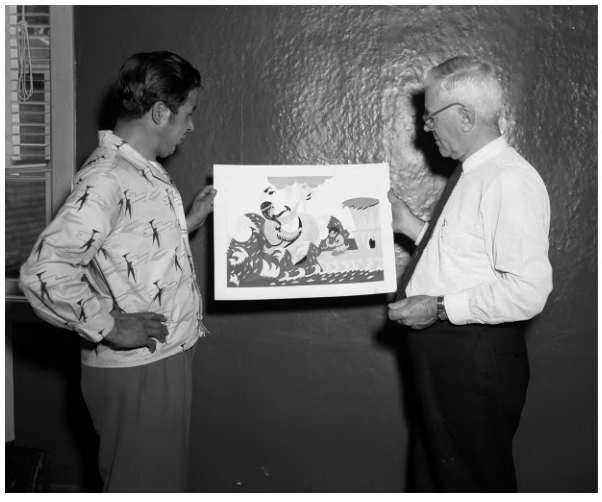
View of Big Cove / Elsipogtog in 1965, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

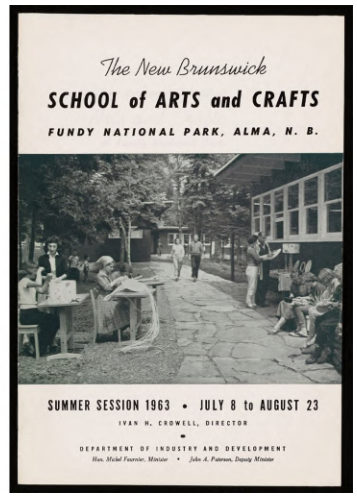
Given these challenges, Big Cove was well poised for federal and provincial attention in the early 1960s. A focus on arts and culture as a way to aid such a community aligned with the federal government's 1951 Massey Commission Report, whose recommendations would transform much of Canada's post-war cultural environment. In the section entitled "Indian Arts and Crafts," the Report acknowledged a widespread ignorance and scorn toward Indigenous culture in the general population, as well as an increasing indifference to traditional cultural pursuits within First Nations communities. While tainted with some obsolete views, the Massey Report did encourage the use of time-honoured materials and craftsmanship (decrying the kitsch of "degraded objects mass-produced for the tourist trade… and other regrettable 'Indian' souvenirs made in Japan"). It also lauded Indigenous art's traditional levels of excellence and design originality, as well as its willingness to adopt new materials. The Report understood the social roadblocks to non-Indigenous Canadians appreciating the value of Indigenous art and artists and recognized that cultural and artistic vibrancy was vital to the social and intellectual health of Canada's Indigenous Peoples. The Report encouraged the federal Indian Affairs Branch to look after these matters and be properly resourced to do so.[2]

With increasing prosperity and leisure time in the 1950s and 1960s, interest and participation in the fine crafts (often called "handicrafts" then) grew throughout

North America, and especially in New Brunswick. The federal and provincial governments saw an opportunity to create a centre of Indigenous art and fine craft—as much for regional economic development as for benefit to the First Nations communities—and pushed hard to encourage it. In many ways, these efforts were inspired by the prominent Inuit co-operative workshops of the Arctic, which were already flourishing.

The main promoter of the MIC was Dr. Ivan H. Crowell, a key figure in the professionalization of fine craft in post-war New Brunswick. One of the first arts administrators in New Brunswick and provincial director of handicrafts from 1946 to 1969, Crowell was also a respected master weaver, teacher, and pewtersmith. Following a stint as director of handicrafts at McGill University, Montreal, in the early 1940s, Crowell moved to Fredericton in 1946 to become director of the handicrafts division of New Brunswick's Department of Trade and Industry. He was encouraged to develop and revive interest in craft production (especially in rural areas) and champion New Brunswick fine craft. To this end, Crowell established a training centre at the newly vacated army base on Fredericton's exhibition grounds that taught woodturning, loom weaving, gemology, leatherwork, and rug hooking.




The New Brunswick
SCHOOL of ARTS and CRAFTS
FUNDY NATIONAL PARK, ALMA, N. B.
SUMMER SESSION 1963 • JULY 8 to AUGUST 23
IVAN H. CROWELL, DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND DEVELOPMENT

LEFT: Michael Francis (*left*) and Ivan H. Crowell (*right*) holding an artwork from Francis's *Micmac Legends of the Little People* series, 1963, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. RIGHT: Summer session brochure for the New Brunswick School of Arts and Crafts at Fundy National Park, 1963, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

Backed by Ottawa

The MIC began with a simple meeting in 1961. Crowell got together with Big Cove Chief Anthony Francis and F.B. McKinnon, the Miramichi, New Brunswick-based Regional Supervisor for the Indian Affairs Branch, to discuss "Indians doing handicraft work on the reserve." Crowell recalled:

> The possibilities looked so promising that they both came to discuss the project with me as the Provincial Director of Handicrafts. It was agreed that we would do some teaching on the Reserve in the hopes of discovering any talents that might be there. We soon found that there was an abundance of unusual talents in the variety of crafts, and I felt a sincere interest in creative handicraft work. This was a most pleasant find.[3]

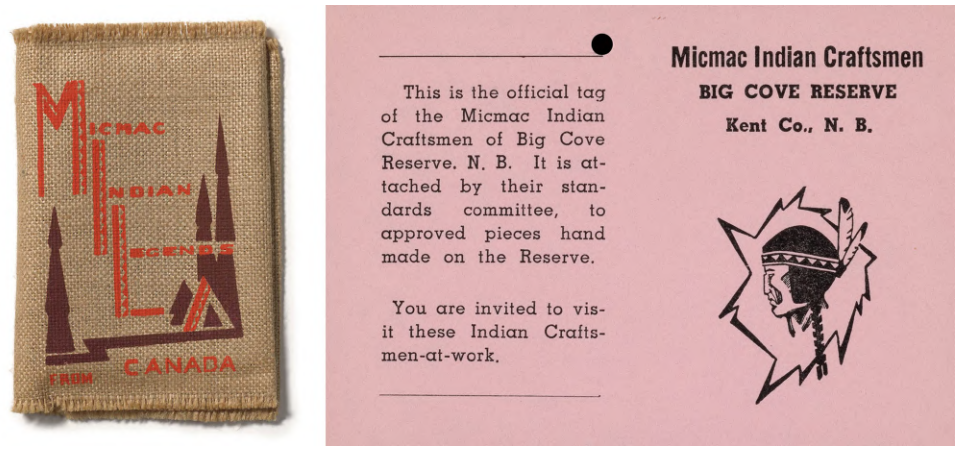
In December 1961, Crowell contacted Andrew Peters and Stephen Dedam of Big Cove as potential artists for the new endeavour. The experiment would focus on creating a cottage industry that specialized in "traditional Indian design," with an eventual aim of employing ten full-time and fifteen to twenty part-time artisans. He distinctly noted that "provision should also be made for training for outstanding Indian artists," using his Handicraft Branch staff as instructors.[4] Small sales of items by Dedam, his brother Michael, and a few

other artists took place early in 1962, and the concept of a Big Cove co-operative grew.

LEFT: Large clay head by Stephen Dedam, c.1961, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. RIGHT: Small clay figures by Stephen Dedam, c.1961, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

In April 1962, the Treasury Board in Ottawa allowed the Indian Affairs Branch to grant seven thousand dollars to the New Brunswick Department of Industry and Development to "provide certain services designed to train Indians in the manufacture of handicraft items and to encourage the development of a handicraft producing enterprise on the Big Cove Reserve in New Brunswick."[5] In late June, Big Cove resident Sam Augustine chaired a public meeting in the basement of the Big Cove school attended by Chief Anthony Francis, four council members, and a handful of locals interested in handicrafts.[6] At the meeting, Crowell boasted the initial craft courses revealed "a tremendous reserve of undeveloped talent among the Big Cove people." (Based on that, he then created a more robust local program as a partnership with the provincial Handicraft Branch, the Big Cove Band, and Indian Affairs.) He also noted that "there was an unlimited market for handicrafts if the workmanship was good." The meeting minutes cited that it was "obvious that there is a general enthusiasm for the project and the Band Council without exception expressed their complete approval." A tentative start date of August 15, 1962, was set.[7]

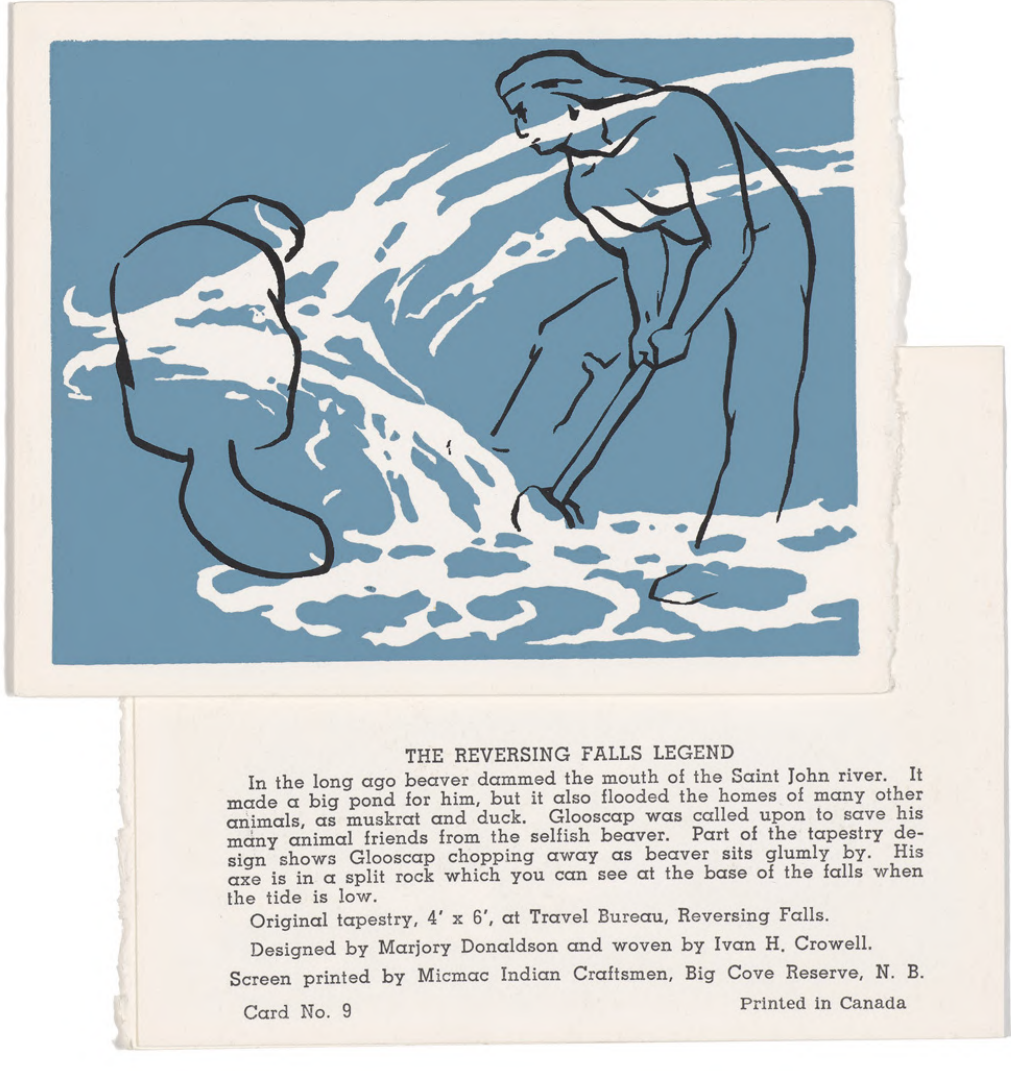
The call for participants spread by word of mouth around the community and generated growing enthusiasm. The provincial government would take on the marketing, mainly through publications and existing networks established through the Handicraft Branch. By November 1962, they had decided on the name "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" with a logo/trademark created by Stephen Dedam.


MICMAC
INDIAN
SCENES
FROM CANADA
This is the official tag of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen of Big Cove Reserve. N. B. It is attached by their standards committee, to approved pieces hand made on the Reserve.
You are invited to visit these Indian Craftsmen-at-work.
Micmac Indian Craftsmen
BIG COVE RESERVE
Kent Co., N. B.

LEFT: Typical hand-sewn and silkscreen burlap package for the MIC Hasti-Notes card sets, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. RIGHT: MIC logo and product tag by Stephen Dedam, 1962, private collection.

The MIC soon focused on the design and production of silkscreened cards on thick paper, called "Hasti-Notes." These were packaged by the dozen in hand-sewn burlap bags that featured a silkscreened cover label. Rendered in a clean, abstract style using bold line, colour, and dramatic composition, along with accounts of traditional Mi'kmaw stories printed on the back that explained the image, these cards would be the MIC's bread and butter. An unproven quantity, fresh on the scene, they nevertheless sold an astonishing 10,000 copies at the National Gift Show in Toronto in September 1962,[8] with a further 3,000 ordered in the following two months.[9]

By the end of 1962, the MIC workshop could turn out about one thousand cards per day. Nine people were employed making cards, cutting and sewing the burlap holders, and packaging the contents. The initial wholesale price for a twelve-pack of cards was sixty cents (with a production cost of thirty-six cents per pack), but it was far from lucrative for the makers, who made only three-quarters of a cent per card.[10]



THE REVERSING FALLS LEGEND

In the long ago beaver dammed the mouth of the Saint John river. It made a big pond for him, but it also flooded the homes of many other animals, as muskrat and duck. Glooscap was called upon to save his many animal friends from the selfish beaver. Part of the tapestry design shows Glooscap chopping away as beaver sits glumly by. His axe is in a split rock which you can see at the base of the falls when the tide is low.

Original tapestry, 4' x 6', at Travel Bureau, Reversing Falls.

Designed by Marjory Donaldson and woven by Ivan H. Crowell.

Screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove Reserve, N. B.

Card No. 9 Printed in Canada

Cards from the initial set of MIC silkscreened Hasti-Note cards, designed by non-Indigenous instructors from the provincial Handicrafts Branch, 1962, 10 x 13 cm, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

Institutional Influence and Indigenous Agency

Plains Cree artist and curator Gerald McMaster suggests that the rapid shift to modern artistic business practices, new materials, and technological expansion were often imposed uncomfortably on Indigenous makers and artists—aspects that were front and centre in the MIC narrative. He noted that: "Indian people… lacked the experience and money needed for the active organization or cultural development of market-oriented artifacts."[11]

This is why it seemed like a good idea for an outside party like the Canadian Handicrafts Guild or the New Brunswick Handicraft Branch to enter Indigenous or Inuit communities and teach the artists there the ins and outs of Western craft while someone other than the community also handled the company finances.[12] The problem was that this system often did not support Indigenous agency over their own financial affairs once they became successful. That said, contemporary Inuit do have agency over their art co-operatives should they decide to place trust in the art market system. Work generated at these co-operatives replaced ways of surviving that were (perhaps) no longer feasible once Inuit were placed in modern communities.

LEFT: Lucy Qinnuayuaq, *Dancing Bird*, 1967, stonecut print on paper, 47 x 63 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton. RIGHT: Navajo double saddle blanket, c.1900, wool, 134.6 x 78.7 cm, private collection.

The MIC project was inspired by these co-operatives. On December 5, 1962, Ivan H. Crowell held a meeting with officers of the federal Northern Affairs department to discuss the national success of silkscreen printing by the "Eskimo" co-operatives. Crowell sought information on successful Inuit art production and distribution, and the copyrighting of sculptures and prints coming out of the North. He was also looking for information on the optimum number of copies artist Stephen Dedam should be making of his clay figurines.

However, Cree-Métis-Saulteaux scholar Jas M. Morgan points out that Inuit did not profit most from art co-operatives in their communities. Despite a booming multi-million-dollar arts industry, Inuit artists often remained poor. Morgan claims that James Houston (1921–2005) started the first co-op with the intention of exploiting Inuit makers for a growing industry dominated by "the desires of settler collectors."[13] Much like the Diné (Navajo) rugs in the southwestern United States, the exploitation of Indigenous art happened through lax regulation of copyright laws (or none at all) and control by non-Indigenous middle managers.

The MIC was a government-sponsored economic initiative in one of the largest and poorest reserves in New Brunswick. The co-operative started as a request for help from Crowell by the then-Chief of Big Cove, Anthony Francis, who said his people did not know how to capitalize on their handicrafts and needed help marketing themselves.[14] Once Crowell decided the community possessed

artistic merit, he agreed to help. The future of the MIC was under the control of the Handicraft Branch of the provincial government and Indian Affairs once grant monies and funding were secured. However good their intentions may have been in promoting Indigenous art and culture, the efforts of non-Indigenous arts professionals and government branches after 1950 to do so were fraught with contradictions.

Stephen Dedam, *The Micmac Legend of the Shooting Star*, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note, 10 x 13 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

After the Second World War, Indigenous Peoples sought fair treatment and fought to preserve rights they were entitled to in- and outside the Indian Act. The assumption that "Indians were going extinct" was still present but slowly diminishing into the 1960s.[15] On one hand, the Canadian state forcefully assimilated Indigenous Peoples into mainstream society. At the same time, government organizations asked them to perform their indigeneity for non-Indigenous people's entertainment and desires. Collecting their stories and art to preserve the "other" became a sort of hobby. The MIC straddled this divide.

Reclaiming a Place in Canadian Art

The fact that in 1960s New Brunswick, Indigenous stories were fused with sophisticated graphics and superior production, and found a wide North American commercial audience, is incredibly significant. Many individuals are still living who worked for the MIC, and each carries fond memories from their

experience. While the MIC story was contemporary, it was part of a continuum of Indigenous material ingenuity from pre-contact up to the present.

LEFT: Miniature Mi'kmaw souvenir canoe, c.1880, birchbark, dyed porcupine quills, wood, spruceroot, private collection. RIGHT: Wabanaki beaded purse, c.1875, wool with silk, cotton, and glass beads, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

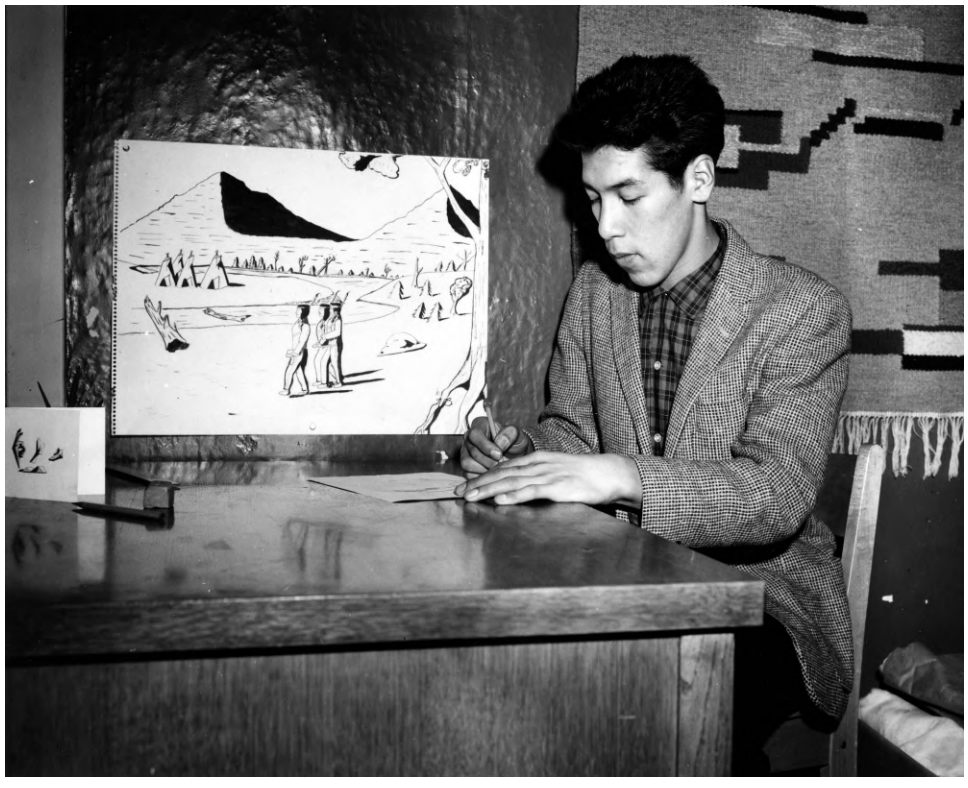
Accounts by early European explorers abound with descriptions of skillful Wabanaki makers and their beautiful handiwork. Author and lawyer Marc Lescarbot witnessed the impressive porcupine quillwork of the Mi'kmaq at Port Royal in 1606–07: "Coloured with red, black, white, and blue, which be the colours that they make, so lively that ours seem in nothing to be comparable to them." In 1691, Récollet missionary Chrestien Le Clercq wrote of Mi'kmaw wigwams "ornamented, as a rule, with a thousand different pictures of birds, moose, otters and beavers, which the women sketch there themselves with their paints." European travellers and explorers were inclined to collect objects from foreign lands, especially souvenirs. Through this, the art entered into European public and private collections. Over the ensuing centuries, waves of settlers in the Maritimes would continue to purchase Indigenous beadwork, basketry, canoes, and snowshoes that were second to none in quality and attractiveness.

The years between 1870 and 1950 are known as the "Reservation Period," and mark some of the most aggressive assimilation policies ever practiced in this country.[16] Indigenous sovereignty stood in the way of colonial progress and Canadian nationhood. First Nations "bands" or "reserves" were created, and the Indian Act was used to enforce the taking of Indigenous children from their families to residential schools. The relationship between Indigenous Nations and the Canadian state has been defined by the Act ever since. Wabanaki'k / Atlantic Canada was not exempt from these iniquitous decisions that would alter what had been a "nation-to-nation relationship" forever.

The 1960s were a pivotal era of social activism on Turtle Island, with the civil rights movement, Red Power, and feminism leading the way. Oppressive systems were widely challenged. The community members of Big Cove faced the same widespread challenges as other Indigenous communities in the province and across the country: poverty, racism, control from Indian agents, and high unemployment rates. Early MIC artist Vincent Barlow recalls few employers in the neighbouring towns of Rexton and Richibucto hiring Indigenous Peoples, forcing dozens of community members to find work in Maine's potato or blueberry fields across the American border. As a purely economic enterprise, one can assume that introducing the proposed MIC handicraft studio at a public meeting in 1962 created excitement and optimism. Jobs would be created, and workers could stay in their own community, dependency on social welfare would lessen, and tourism would blossom.

This created tensions, of course. Gerald McMaster argues that our relationships to cultural objects start to change as they enter trade economics.[17] Indigenous Peoples moved from being dependent on the land and water (their resources)

to a foreign economic system founded upon concepts of possession, profit, and achievement that inevitably undermined Indigenous customs and values.



MIC artist Vincent Barlow with one of his ink on paper works, 1962, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

As well, "high art," as reflected by Western standards of visual art, fine craft, and architectural traditions, does not readily embrace Indigenous art forms. The categorization of Indigenous art in Euro-American and Western art traditions is steeped in racism, with a classification built upon an image of the "primitive other." It is as if to say: Indigenous art must be something else because Indigenous Peoples are "something else." This outdated theory is still present in art history canons and sometimes blocks the artistic interpretation of art produced by BIPOC communities. Classifying Indigenous art as solely "craft" or "souvenir art" is deeply ethnocentric.[18]

Allowing for all that, the artwork of the MIC (which was often dubbed "handicraft") could potentially be considered fine art based on its modernist aesthetic. Individuals within the fine art world could appreciate it. It could also be appreciated by the community of Big Cove and the entire Mi'kmaq Nation, who held the work to its highest standards, and could relate it to petroglyphs, cartoons, scribbles in notebooks, and even Yahtzee cards. It is art in its own right, not because it fits into the modernist tradition but because it belongs to the visual language of the Mi'kmaq. Their artistic evolution should be appreciated and celebrated.

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons–Glooscap, Tatler the Loon, and the Summer Queen*, 1963, gouache on paper, 52 x 73 cm, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

KEY WORKS

The Micmac Indian Craftsmen produced an extraordinary range of work that merged Mi’kmaq storytelling with modern design. Their silkscreened Hasti-Note cards, woven textiles, tapestries, and ceramics carried legends of Glooscap, the Little People, and the natural world into everyday life. Blending fine craft and graphic innovation, these works became powerful expressions of cultural identity and creativity, celebrated nationally for their artistry and modern vision.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons 1963

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons*, 1963
Six-card silkscreened Hasti-Note set, 10 x 13 cm (each)
Private collection

One of the first outputs of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) was the design and production of "Hasti-Notes"—folded silkscreen cards on thick paper. The cards were packaged by the dozen in hand-sewn burlap bags with silkscreened cover labels. Rendered in an abstracted style using bold lines, colours, and dramatic compositions, and accompanied by short texts printed on the back, the cards depicted Mi'kmaq stories and legends that had been passed down through many generations. These cards would become the MIC's primary source of income for the duration of the co-operative.

The first series of cards fully conceived and designed by Michael Francis was *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons*. The *Seasons* cards depicted Mi'kmaq cultural figures Glooscap and Tatler the Loon facilitating the arrival of the Summer Queen to their territory. These seasonal narratives, told to Francis by his grandfather, link the cycles of nature to Mi'kmaq knowledge and values. Mimicking popular graphic styles of the late 1950s and early 1960s, Francis's early Hasti-Note images were set against a consistent blue background, where screens of white, black, green, brown, and grey animated each scene.

The shapes and contrasting colours of the cards seem influenced by American Southwest geometric patterns, like those of the Diné (Navajo) and Hopi Nations. Southwestern-inspired prints and blankets could have resonated with Francis as being representative of Indigenous Peoples, a sensitivity that was gaining ground with the Pan-Indian movement.[1] In later cards, and in a calendar designed by the MIC for the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, Francis's designs evolved to be more organic, curvilinear, and detailed with a varied colour palette.

Illustration of Hopi, Zuni, and Navajo blankets, reproduced in the *New International Encyclopedia* (New York City: Dodd Mea, and Company, 1902).

The first series of Hasti-Notes sold an astonishing 10,000 units at the National Gift Show in Toronto in September 1962.[2] While the initial sets were hand-painted, the strong commercial demand at the outset led the MIC to quickly adjust their process for designing and printing Hasti-Notes—adopting a commercial printing process using photo-sensitive film and silkscreens.[3] The initial 1962 cards were made by the artisans of the MIC studio at Big Cove, but with designs by non-Indigenous artists. It was quickly understood that they could sell many more if the artwork itself was designed by Mi'kmaq artists—enter Michael Francis and Stephen Dedam. As MIC works gained recognition, Francis's designs on Hasti-Notes were soon translated into other decorative objects, including handwoven placements, table runners, and ceramics.

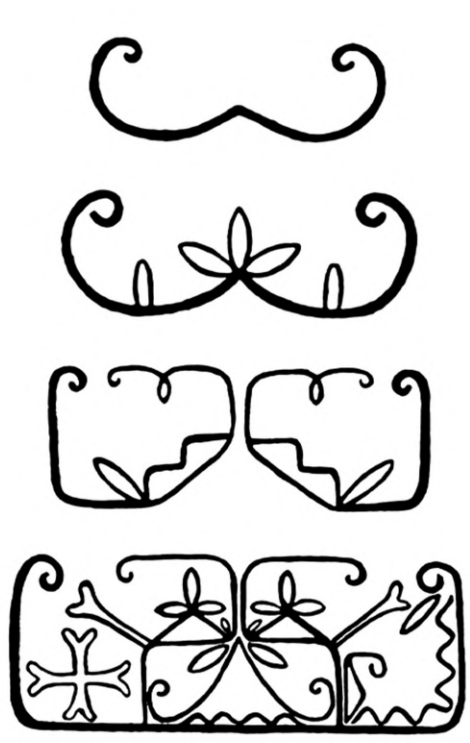
Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People 1963

The Little People, whom we call Bugel-u-da-mooch, played a very important part in the lives of the Micmac Indians. They taught us many things including how to make canoes, arrows and wigwams. They lead us to good places of hunting and fishing, where our people have lived happily for many centuries.
However, the Little People have always demanded a small gift every time our canoes passed their home at Little People's Point. If we failed to do this they might cause great storms to rage about us, or horrible dreams to visit us in our sleep.
The Micmac Indians today have great respect for their Little People.
Design and legend by Michael Francis.
Screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove, Kent Co., N. B.
Little People Series I
Printed in Canada

Michael Francis, *Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People*, Series 1A, 1963
Silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm
Private collection

Many of the stories recorded and transcribed by Michael Francis in the 1960s were translated into the Hasti-Note card sets, which became one of the most effective vehicles deployed by the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) for circulating Mi'kmaq knowledge in visual form. Their compact and serial design enabled the MIC to adapt oral histories into images that could travel beyond the Big Cove community while retaining narrative specificity. Stories of the Little People figure prominently among these works, such as the *Micmac Indian*

Legends of the Little People Hasti-Note set. They also appear across multiple formats, including monumental tapestries and fine china, demonstrating the flexibility of the card designs as a conceptual and visual foundation.



LEFT: The Wabanaki decorative motive: the Double Curve, reproduced in *The Double-Curve Motive in Northeastern Algonkian Art*, by Frank G. Speck (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914), 21. RIGHT: Wabanaki beaded coat with double-curve pattern, c.1825, wool with cotton, silk, and glass beads, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

The Little People (Puklatmu'jk in Mi'kmaw, Geowlud-mos-sis-eg in Wolastoqey) are small-statured beings, no bigger than a three-year-old with similar sizing to that of an Irish leprechaun.[1] Little People are typically described as magical beings considered both good and bad, depending on how one was raised to approach them. They are often met with fear or annoyance. Community members across Wabanaki'k (the place—the dawnland) have experienced personal sightings for centuries.[2] Stories describe the little beings as tricksters but still respected by Wabanakiyik (the people) because they are understood as special, with almost supernatural abilities.[3] The Little People have been known to play tricks like braiding animal tails, pulling clothes off laundry lines, and knocking over stacks of wood. Small offerings of trinkets or candy are made to ward off their mischief.

Within the *Little People* Hasti-Note series, these narratives were rendered through a visual language shaped both by market conditions and by Francis's evolving design vocabulary. While early works created by the MIC show affinities with geometric patterns associated with the Diné (Navajo) Nation, over time, Francis increasingly drew on regional Wabanaki design traditions, particularly the Double Curve, a Wabanaki motif found on beaded textiles, birch bark containers, and canoes.[4] These symmetrical forms represent a Wabanaki visual language. Some curves contain direct meanings that pertain to governance and spirituality. Others speak to relationships, such as marriages, families, communities, and our relationship to plants, water, and land. Some even represent an individual's life journey starting from birth and back to the mother in death.

In one card from the Little People Hasti-Note set, Francis subtly used the design of the Double-Curve foundation. Two double incurves enclose a centre peak triangle that represents a stylized wigwam. A central figure appears to be in prayer, on their knees with their hands together. Images of animals and trees are on both sides, mirroring one another. Double Curves are often inorganic, calculated, and balanced, whereas the environment they derive from is wild, organic, and free-flowing foliage.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle 1963

THE MICMAC INDIAN LEGEND OF THE TURTLE

In the long ago turtle was the great story teller of all the birds and animals of Glooscap's land. During the summer he had many friends, but when the cold Winter King came from the northland, most of the birds flew south to the home of the warm Summer Queen and many of the animals hibernated deep underground. Turtle did not know how to do this. He walked so slowly that the cold Winter King soon caught up with him. He nearly froze. He was so very cold and lonesome.

However, his great friendliness was his way to rescue. He talked to the geese about taking him to the warm south. They agreed to do so only if they could find some way to stop turtle from talking, for he was a bore to the geese who liked to honk their tales far and wide. The wiley geese found a way. They carried turtle by his mouth on a stick and, of course, once off the ground he didn't dare open his mouth.

He did not enjoy his stay in the land of the Summer Queen. It was too warm in his heavy shell and he missed many of his dear friends. The next summer the maidens of the Queen brought him back to Glooscap's land and taught him how to hibernate.

It is said that if you find a turtle hibernating from the cold of the great Winter King he will be deep under the soil telling stories all winter long to his many friends.

Designed by Michael Francis

Screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove, Kent Co., N. B.

Series 2 Printed In Canada

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle*, Series 2A, 1963
Silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm
Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle six-card silkscreened Hasti-Note set was designed by Michael Francis in 1963. Notably, this series displayed Francis's rapid evolution in design skill and graphic sophistication. Less than a year after he designed the initial *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons* Hasti-Note set, 1963, his art displayed not only a much more fluid and organic artistic hand, but also a more varied and colourful approach from card to card within this specific set.

A broader and warmer colour palette than the earlier sets was used. Where the Seasons and Little People card sets were bound by a narrower range of sky blue, brown, green, orange, and black, the Turtle suite of cards used yellow, reds, two shades of green to give depth to the foliage, and a salmon pink. A more naturalistic graphic approach rendered animals like the squirrel, fox, frog, birds, geese, turtle, and especially the cascading Winter King.

The fourth card of the set, in particular, displayed a remarkable command of dynamism on its flat silkscreened surface. With billowing clouds behind it, the turtle clutched an angled stick, sandwiched between two geese of slightly different sizes to imply depth in the picture plane—their wings flapping opposite one another in a near-perfectly proportioned image.

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle*, Series 2D, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

Like *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons* and the *Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People* sets, the *Legend of the Turtle* cards were sold in designed, burlap pouches and each displayed the following text on its back:

> **THE MICMAC LEGEND OF THE TURTLE**
> In the long ago, turtle was the great storyteller of all the birds and animals of Glooscap's land. During the summer he had many friends, but when the cold Winter King came from the northland, most of the birds flew south to the home of the warm Summer Queen and many of the animals hibernated deep underground. Turtle did not know how to do this. He walked so slowly that the cold Winter King soon caught up with him. He nearly froze. He was so very cold and lonesome.
>
> However, his great friendliness was his way to rescue. He talked to the geese about taking him to the warm south. They agreed to do so only if they could find some way to stop turtle from talking, for he was a bore to the geese who liked to honk their tales far and wide. The wiley geese found a way. They carried turtle by his mouth on a stick and, of course, once off the ground he didn't dare open his mouth.

> He did not enjoy his stay in the land of the Summer Queen. It was too warm in his heavy shell and he missed many of his dear friends. The next summer the maidens of the Queen brought him back to Glooscap's land and taught him how to hibernate.
>
> It is said that if you find a turtle hibernating from the cold of the great Winter King he will be deep under the soil telling stories all winter long to his many friends.

Taken together, the cards in the *Legend of the Turtle* set signal a turning point in Francis's development as both a storyteller and a designer. The expanded palette and heightened sense of movement suggest more free experimentation.

The Legend of the Tidal Bore 1963

Michael Francis, *The Legend of the Tidal Bore*, 1963
Silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm
Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton

From the outset, the Hasti-Note cards functioned as more than just illustrated products: they translated Mi'kmaq teachings into modern visual form. Stories guided design choices—and many are rooted in Mi'kmaq relationships with the natural world, where animals, waters, and land act as agents within living systems of knowledge.

Sea creatures make several appearances in Michael Francis's Hasti-Note designs and stories. For example, his *The Legend of the Tidal Bore* image depicts two stark graphic figures, an eel and lobster, entangled in conflict. Their brawling creates the muddy tidal bore of the Petitcodiac River, that runs through southeastern New Brunswick. The artwork's blue background, white circles and tall green markings resembling bubbles and water plants, respectively, suggest the figures are underwater, and the accompanying story reveals the animals' battle:

Ancient Mi'kmaw petroglyphs at Kejimkujik National Park, Nova Scotia, date unknown, photograph by Parks Canada.

> In the days of Glooscap, the water was clear and fresh. Until a monster Eel swam down the river and pushed all of the fishes and all the freshwater into the salty bay. Turtle told Glooscap of the cruel hardships that resulted. Glooscap gave great powers to Lobster, who grew much in size and strength and fought the evil Eel. The long battle stirred up much mud and many waves far up the river until the Eel was killed. And even today in Glooscap's bay and on the muddy river, with an elbow bend, the battle scene takes place twice a day.[1]

Mi'kmaw spirituality and worldview affirms their relationality to Katew (American eel in the Mi'kmaw language). Katew is a revered spiritual being as well as a vital food source and medicine. In traditional stories, the animal represents a special gift offered to Glooscap in exchange for a successful hunt or fishing trip.[2] Images of eels show up in petroglyph iconography at Kejimkujik National Park in Nova Scotia. In Francis's image, the lobster has severed the eel and won the battle. The severed eel takes a shape similar to a Wabanaki Double-Curve motif.

Seen in this light, Francis's use of the Double-Curve aligns his Hasti-Note designs with a much longer history of Wabanaki visual expression. The flowing contours of the eel and the looping movement of the water echo forms found in Wabanaki cultural objects, including the petroglyphs at Kejimkujik. The cards, while modern in medium and circulation, remain connected to enduring visual languages through which Mi'kmaq and Wabanaki peoples have long conveyed interconnected relationships between the animal and spiritual worlds.

The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People (Fine China Set) 1964

Royal Tuscan, *The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People* fine china set, 1964
Private collection

An unexpected opportunity for the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) was a collaboration with Royal Tuscan, a long-established British fine porcelain manufacturer known in the postwar period for producing export-oriented tableware and for adapting licensed decorative designs for international markets. Through this partnership, designs by Michael Francis were incorporated into a line of white china cups, saucers, creamers, and sugar bowls, extending Mi'kmaq imagery into the realm of industrially produced domestic objects.

The saucers were clean and unornamented, with a light blue sans-serif text labelled "The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People" around the rim. This framing reinforced the narrative origins of the imagery. The line featured six cup designs, matching those on Francis's *Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People* Hasti-Note card set, 1963, underscoring the role of the cards as a foundational design source that could be translated across media.

MICMAC INDIAN CRAFTSMEN'S CATALOGUE
BIG COVE
RESERVE,
KENT CO.,
N. B.
Each on deerskin $3.50
Each on white burlap or handwoven material $2.50
TEA APRONS & LUNCHEON SETS
Here again the very flexible designs of the Indian legends have been adapted for matching tea aprons and luncheon sets. All of these designs are being printed on natural and on coloured burlap. The colors and the materials are fully washable.
Natural Burlap
Colored Burlap
Tea Apron
$2.00
$2.75
Placemat
WEAVING
Micmacs of old wore skins, they were not weavers. Micmacs today are remarkably skillful at this craft. All designs and colors are original. They even developed their own Micmac Tartan! Men are the chief weavers at Big Cove. Numerous designs are offered for each item.
Placemats 12" x 18" - - - - $1.40
Table runners 12" x 30" - - - $2.75
Car robe 50" x 72" - $10.00 - $15.00
Lap robe 40" x 40" - $ 6.00 - $ 8.00
Shoe bags - - - - - - - - $3.98
Handwoven tie - - - - - - - $3.50
Micmac Tartan - - - - - $5.00 per yard

LEFT: Cover of the MIC catalogue, 1964, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. RIGHT: Spread from the MIC catalogue, 1964, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. Responding to increasing demand and requirements from shops and buyers, this twelve-page catalogue was produced listing all of the MIC items for sale.

Sales and international distribution were handled by Hayward and Warwick, a venerable china and tableware importer in Saint John, New Brunswick. As demand for MIC goods continued to grow, and new items were added, the co-operative produced a twelve-page catalogue in 1964 listing its full range of offerings. The catalogue included the Royal Tuscan china set. This collaboration illustrates how MIC designs moved from small-scale graphic production to international commercial circulation, revealing both the opportunities and complexities of bringing Mi'kmaq stories into global commodity systems.

"Canadian Indian Legends," Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire Calendar 1965–66

Michael Francis—Micmac Indian Artist

THE RAINBOW OF LAKE LOUISE—STONEY INDIAN LEGEND—*Alberta*

In the long, long ago, powerful giants lived in the Rocky Mountains near a lake we now call Lake Louise. One day, as a beautiful rainbow was shining over the lake, a giant decided to seize the coloured arch and make from it a huge bow for hunting. He was sadly disappointed, for when he grasped it, the rainbow lost all its lovely colours and broke into innumerable pieces. Walking sadly away, he threw the shattered rainbow carelessly into the lake.

Surprising as it may seem, the giant never knew the miracle that followed. Once in the water, the rainbow's bright colours returned. You can see them there today, if you get up early to view the sunrise over Lake Louise.

Ivan H. Crowell

I. O. D. E.

AUGUST 1965

JULY 1965						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SEPTEMBER 1965						
SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4 Britain and Canada Enter First World War, 1914	5	6	7
8 Battle of Amiens, 1918 Battle of Britain Begins, 1940	9	10	11 First Quebec Conference Begins, 1943	12	13	14 The Atlantic Charter, 1941
15 Battle of Hill 70, 1917 Invasion of Southern France, 1944 V-J Day, 1945	16	17	18	19 Dieppe, 1942 Closing of the Falaise Gap, 1944	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	First Quar. 4	Full Moon 12	Last Quar. 19	New Moon 26

Michael Francis, *The Rainbow of Lake Louise–Stoney Indian Legend–Alberta, Kisikwekewiku's*, 1965
Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire Calendar

WABANAKI MODERN

The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" by Emma Hassencahl-Perley & John Leroux

In late 1963, the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) received one of its most visible contracts: the design of the 1965 calendar commissioned by the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE).[1] Distributed widely to schools across Canada, the calendar was a long-standing educational tool. From 1926 onward, it had prominently featured a large Union Jack and other symbols that reinforced a British-centred version of Canadian identity. However, with the MIC tapped to design, the 1965 and 1966 editions marked a notable shift in both content and symbolism.

The plan was to include an Indigenous legend for each province, plus two Inuit legends to complete a series of twelve. Michael Francis completed ten of the monthly images and Stephen Dedam contributed two. The stories chosen for the four Atlantic Provinces were "The Origin of the Beothuks" (Newfoundland), "How Glooscap Formed the Birds" (New Brunswick), "Glooscap's Summer Home" (Prince Edward Island), and "The Legend of the Seasons" (Nova Scotia). Each story was distilled into a single image designed to be read quickly and remembered easily, combining simplified figures with flat, high-contrast colour. The graphic style followed the MIC's established bold and graphic aesthetic.

LEFT: Michael Francis, *How Glooscap Formed the Birds–New Brunswick*, 1963, original artwork for the IODE calendar, gouache on paper, 35 x 53 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John. RIGHT: Michael Francis, *Where the Caribou Go–Northwest Territories*, 1963, original artwork for the IODE calendar, gouache on paper, 33 x 53 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

Reginae Tait, IODE's National Educational Secretary, explicitly acknowledged the cultural and symbolic implications of the redesigned calendar. She observed that "the winds of change which are sweeping the land will brush the calendar on its fortieth birthday,"[2] noting that the new format was "produced as an encouragement to Indian art in Canada."[3] Through IODE's established distribution networks, thousands of copies were placed in classrooms across the country, where the images became a daily point of contact for schoolchildren and their teachers, bringing contemporary Indigenous art and storytelling into spaces long shaped by colonial curricula.

The calendar's impact was quickly recognized by government and public officials. R.F. Battle, the assistant deputy minister of Indian Affairs, described it as "tangible support" for raising the profile of Indigenous art,[4] and praised it as "an excellent piece of work."[5] He saw the designs being "most handsome and striking evidence of the talent" of the MIC artists.[6] New Brunswick premier Louis

J. Robichaud extended similar praise for the calendar and the artists: "I do wish to commend the IODE for this project of encouragement to Indian art in Canada and for its educational benefits to students throughout the nation. I am particularly pleased that the illustrations for the calendar have been executed by our own Michael Francis and Stephen Dedam."[7]

Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose (Tapestry Suite) 1964

Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964
Wool (handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell), 122 x 160 cm
University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton

In early 1964, just two years after the founding of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC), Michael Francis received a contract to design six large handwoven tapestries for the New Brunswick Teachers' College in Fredericton, based on his *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose* Hasti-Note series. Francis was paid $120 for each—a substantial fee at the time that underscores the seriousness of the commission and the professional status being accorded to his work. Ivan H. Crowell undertook the weaving, translating Francis's designs into textile form and further cementing tapestry as a collaborative practice within the MIC.[1] The tapestry series was complex and would have made for one of the most prominent works of contemporary Indigenous art in a non-reserve setting in Atlantic Canada at that time.

From the beginning, the MIC studio was positioned not only as a site of artistic production but also as a place of skills training and professional development. Design and production of tapestry weaving were taught to five individuals, while

LEFT: Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964, wool (handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell), 122 x 160 cm, University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. RIGHT: Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964, wool (handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell), 122 x 160 cm, University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton.

textile printing was introduced to ten, reflecting a deliberate effort to diversify media and to move beyond small-scale craft objects to more complex, labour-intensive works. Crowell's early interest in tapestry was central to this expansion. Even in the studio's formative years, he articulated a vision for a dedicated MIC tapestry workshop, understanding that the production of woven works could open up "the possibility of selling them, for example, to External Affairs to be hung in embassies and residences abroad."[2]

The six *Wild Goose* tapestries were facsimiles of the composition and proportion of the allied six-card Hasti-Note set, with even the colours matching in most cases. The earlier series of cards included the following text on the recto:

> **THE MICMAC LEGEND OF THE WILD GOOSE**
>
> When birds migrated to the south in the long, long ago, they came and left by themselves. Many of the little ones were killed by the storms. This caused great sorrow to Glooscap, the great God of the Micmac Indians. He asked the Wild Goose, the largest bird and the last one to leave the north each fall, to care for all the smaller ones. The Wild Goose called all the little birds together and told them of Glooscap's wonderful plan. They agreed that the Wild Goose would lead them in their long flight to the south, shelter them in their far away homes, be with them during their journey back and protect them while they were in the North during the summer season.
>
> Ever since the time of Glooscap the Wild Goose has been the guide and protector of all the small birds that come to our country each year.

Large in scale and designed for permanent display, the *Wild Goose* tapestry suite marked a significant departure from the small-format works for which the MIC was initially known. The tapestries translated Mi'kmaq oral tradition into a monumental medium. Their position within an institutional setting demanded serious attention.

Micmac Legends of the Little People (Tapestry) 1965

Michael Francis, *Micmac Legends of the Little People*, 1965
Wool tapestry (handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell), 6.6 x 1.22 m
University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton

Following the successful installation of the *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose* tapestry series, 1964, at the New Brunswick Teachers' College, another textile commission soon came to the Micmac Indian Craftsmen. This was a much longer, monumental piece that would hang in the Teachers' College library, depicting the full sweep of Michael Francis's *Micmac Legends of the Little People* Hasti-Note card set.

The tapestry was conceptualized akin to a filmstrip, with narrative episodes spanning its massive footprint at more than six and a half metres in length.[1] The scenes from left to right include a member of the Little People standing alongside Glooscap at the water's edge, a pair of birchbark wigwams, a deer and fish, a central symmetrical image of two Little People aside a fire and a sacred floating arrowhead, a lightning storm, a deer and owl, and finally, a pair of Little People harvesting birchbark from a tree next to their large canoe. The colour field of blues, greens, browns, and yellows are punctuated by greys and black edging, and the overall composition is cleverly broken up by the tree verticals that all soar past the tapestry's top edge.

Back of the *Micmac Legends of the Little People tapestry*, 1965, showing the original colours of the wool.

Crafted in 1964 and 1965, Francis's final tapestry is in remarkable condition (save for some colour fading due to light exposure). The work was signed by the artists' initials in the lower left-hand corner: MF (Michael Francis) and IHC (Ivan

H. Crowell). A clever and subtle way to mark the date of creation—while not cluttering the visual focus of the tapestry—can be seen next to these initials. A single vertical line of stitched dots runs from top to bottom with one dot (1), nine dots (9), six dots (6), and five dots (5), with spaces between each run making for a clear 1-9-6-5. This dating method was also used in the *Legend of the Wild Goose* tapestries.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Tatler—the Loon (Wall Hanging) 1964

THE MICMAC INDIAN LEGEND
OF TATLER - THE LOON
TATLER WAS THE FRIEND GUIDE
AND MESSENGER OF GLOOSCAP THE
GREAT GOD OF THE MICMACS.
TATLER FLEW OVER LAND AND
TO FIND GOOD HUNTING AND FISHING
AREAS AND TO REPORT THEM ALL
TO GLOOSCAP.
HE GUIDED GLOOSCAP ON HIS
ANNUAL SPRING SEARCH FOR THE
WARM SUMMER QUEEN.
TATLER CARRIED MESSENGES
FROM GLOOSCAP TO ALL THE CHIEFS
OF THE MICMAC TRIBES.
LEGEND AND DESIGN BY MICHAEL FRANCIS
HAND PRINTED ON DEERSKIN BY
MICMAC INDIAN CRAFTSMEN
BIG COVE KENT COUNTY N.B. CANADA

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Tatler—the Loon*, 1964
Silkscreened wall hanging, serigraph on deerskin, wood, 46 x 15 cm
New Brunswick Museum, Saint John

WABANAKI MODERN

The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" by Emma Hassencahl-Perley & John Leroux

Keeping Michael Francis employed full-time was a priority for Ivan H. Crowell, particularly given the limited and irregular market for handcrafted Indigenous goods in the early 1960s. To stabilize income and broaden opportunities, the Handicrafts Branch occasionally contracted his services out to other organizations, notably with the Forsythe Shirt Company (discussions, however, did not result in a final product). Through his commissioned work, Francis was positioned not only as a craft producer but also as a modern designer. One of the ways in which Francis achieved this was through the development of graphically striking figures that could circulate across media.

Among the recurring figures in the Micmac Indian Craftsmen's (MIC) visual output, Tatler the Loon emerged as a recognizable motif, functioning as both a narrative subject drawn from Mi'kmaq oral tradition and a flexible design form suited to modern production. The angular, stylized loons designed by Francis were first seen in his *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons* Hasti-Note set, 1963, and he returned to the figure frequently in the production of works in other media—from fabric design and deerskin wall hangings to a white shirt he often wore. As the MIC sought objects that could be made efficiently, sold at accessible price points, and displayed easily in domestic interiors, the silkscreened wall hanging became an especially effective format.

LEFT: Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons*, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note 22F, 10 x 13 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Close-up of Michael Francis's loon "signature."

The silkscreened hangings were around 15 to 18 inches in height, with tasseled bottoms and a pencil-sized stained wood rod through the top for hanging. On the backs were silkscreened texts of the depicted stories, which included different animal tales and stories of the seasons. They cost $3.50 each. One hanging featuring a tall Tatler includes the text "The Micmac Indian Legend of Tatler—the Loon" on the back. By the time this work was created in 1964, Francis would sometimes "sign" his work with a small figure of a flying loon. In the case of the Tatler deerskin wall hanging, the large upright Tatler with its bright blue shadow is counterpointed with a similar loon design in the lower right corner—Michael Francis's effective "signature."

The Legend of Kingfisher 1965

Stephen Dedam, *The Legend of Kingfisher*, 1965
Gouache on paper, 38 x 53 cm
New Brunswick Museum, Saint John

This 38 x 53 cm gouache-on-paper work by Stephen Dedam, created in 1965, depicts a seaside scene structured around the figure of Glooscap, a cultural hero in Mi'kmaq oral tradition. Seated at the water's edge with one hand outstretched, Glooscap appears as a guiding presence. Around him unfold a series of interrelated actions: a fisherman carrying a long trident leister (fish spear) walking toward the shoreline, a large fish riding a great wave, and a kingfisher hovering over the three.

The painting is among Dedam's more accomplished works, both in compositional control and in its synthesis of narrative and design. Although Dedam's output was substantial, it has often been overshadowed by the more widely circulated designs of Michael Francis. Here, however, Dedam demonstrates confidence in the handling of colour and space, using flattened planes and bold contour lines to animate the scene. The kingfisher functions as a visual anchor that reinforces the painting's relationships between elements.

WABANAKI MODERN

The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" by Emma Hassencahl-Perley & John Leroux

Norval Morrisseau, *Moose Dream Legend*, 1962, oil on wove paper, 54.6 x 75.3 cm, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto.

This kingfisher painting is a fitting example of the emerging Pan-Indian artwork in Canada of the time. Dedam's visual elements and motifs emulate West Coast Indigenous forms—most notably the use of ovoid and formline-inspired shapes—while also incorporating distinct curvilinear black outlines associated with the Woodland School and the work of Norval Morrisseau (1932–2007). At the same time, the painting is not derivative. Its imagery and compositional logic were clearly shaped within the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) studio, where artists actively experimented with modern graphic forms while grounding their work in Mi'kmaq stories and coastal lifeways. In this sense, the painting exemplifies how MIC artists negotiated multiple visual traditions, producing works that were at once locally rooted and conversant with national Indigenous art movements of the period.

RECOGNITION & REACH

The Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) became a national phenomenon, transforming Indigenous storytelling through modern design. Featured in major exhibitions and school textbooks, their work reached hundreds of thousands and was hailed in newspapers nationwide as both innovative and culturally vital. The MIC fused narrative, artistry, and entrepreneurship in ways never before seen. Their popularity and influence marked a watershed moment in Canada, bringing Indigenous voices and stories into the national imagination.

Optimism in the MIC Workshop

After the 1962 gift show, the MIC saw a wave of interest coming and ordered 70,000 blank Hasti-Note cards in anticipation.[1] This sudden interest in Indigenous artistic content prompted Ivan H. Crowell to contact the national office of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE). They decided that the MIC artists would illustrate their nationally distributed calendar, which had annual orders in the tens of thousands and frequently ended up in schools.

Canadian
Indian
Legends
Illustrations by Michael Francis and Stephen Dedam, Micmac Indian Artists from New Brunswick.
Legends by Dr. Ivan H. Crowell, Director, Handicrafts Branch, Dept. of Industry and Development, New Brunswick.
IMPERIAL ORDER DAUGHTERS OF THE EMPIRE
THE IMPERIAL ORDER DAUGHTERS OF THE EMPIRE

Cover of IODE's 1965 *Canadian Indian Legends* calendar, with designs by Michael Francis and Stephen Dedam, private collection.

Crowell and his staff's understanding of the MIC's potential is evident in his early correspondence and meeting records. So too is his consideration of how important it was to have the people of Big Cove design and make the pieces themselves. He felt his role should be geared toward teaching technique, not influencing their personal artistic styles.[2] While Crowell knew revenue was important, creating a true collaborative studio was equally so. Craftsman Vincent Barlow recalls: "Eva and I and Stephen and all, we always helped each other. If I ran against a problem, I said, 'Steve, how do we do it this?' And he would show me, 'Okay, good.' That's how we did it. And then, if anybody asks me anything that I have any knowledge towards, I'd help them out as well."[3]

Even with the positive maker environment, there were growing pains where business and technical skills were involved. Some government officials expressed frustrations with what they saw as the group's educational and practical limitations, a contemptuous tone of "us" and "them" creeping into their words:

> We have, undoubtedly, considerable talent on this reserve, but most of them have not gone beyond grades 5 or 6 and never received one hour of instruction in such things as color appreciation, balance, tones, and whatever else a designer's work should reflect. This is a career of hard, painstaking work and even those with talent must learn to do "finished" work.[4]

These issues notwithstanding, optimism was taking hold. The MIC opened a bank account and purchased raw materials. Orders started pouring in. F.B. McKinnon wrote that "if a grant of $7,000 is instrumental in training and

developing 20 to 30 people and initiating a project that could become worthwhile, I believe it should be considered a good investment."[5]

The progressive qualities of the new MIC work were not lost on Crowell, "… the Indians are particularly anxious to make the most modern products using the most modern methods," he noted.[6] By February 1963, government officials worried about bootleg or foreign imitations of the MIC's popular graphic designs began looking into how to secure patents and other forms of intellectual property protection to safeguard them.[7]

Artists at the Centre

A decisive hire took place at the onset of 1963. Michael Francis was back home visiting his sister Sarah at Big Cove that January. After a meeting with Crowell, he was brought into the fold for two weeks. He was supposed to go back to Maine for a trucking job, but he never did, and his arrival would be transformational. Crowell immediately recognized that Francis was "a highly gifted artist and designer."[8] The MIC had not only found their main designer and creative hand, but their greatest public ambassador. Vincent Barlow called him "one of the finest artists that I've ever seen."[9] Francis was also a talented storyteller and musician; he was even hired to provide translation from English to Mi'kmaw for a Walt Disney movie. It was for the 1965 feature film *Those Calloways*, a live-action drama that had a Mi'kmaw speaking character —played by an Italian American, which was awkwardly typical for the era.

Michael Francis presenting a number of his MIC artworks at a New Brunswick Craftsmen's Council exhibition in Moncton, 1963, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

In a letter sent to the Chief of the Indian Affairs' Economic Development Division in Ottawa, F.B. McKinnon was excited about the conversion of Big Cove's old one-room schoolhouse into the MIC studio workshop, but his big focus was on Francis's arrival. He predicted that pairing him with Stephen Dedam would produce great results:

> [Francis] is a talented type, full of old Indian legends and has considerable artistic ability. He was referred to Dr. Crowell and he is now in Fredericton studying and working on Indian designs originating from the old stories. Any design used on the cards he will be paid at the rate of $5.00 each.

> When the design is enlarged and used for tapestries he will be paid $35… Proceeding simultaneously with designs for cards and tapestries are designs for jewellery and pottery from the same general theme. These will be made on the Big Cove reserve by Steve Dedam if, of course, they are in demand.[10]

The Hasti-Notes' strong sales made them a top priority, with tapestries and wall hangings next in line. Michael Francis was put in charge of their design, as well as writing the legends/stories from Mi'kmaw Oral History. The first one from his hand was *The Cry of the Wolf*, a bold silhouette of a howling wolf at night. His effect was immediately felt. His new Hasti-Note designs, the ink hardly dry, sold 31,032 cards at the Toronto gift show in February 1963. This order was based for the first quarter of the year only, which implied sales of 120,000 cards annually, far more than Crowell anticipated. The studio bumped their supply orders overnight, from small tins of ink to ten-gallon drums. Card orders were increased to lots of 48,000 blanks at a time.[11] By the end of the 1962–63 government fiscal year, the MIC had sold an astounding 176,000 silkscreened Hasti-Note cards across North America.[12]

THE CRY OF THE WOLF
Many years ago
Indians believed that
If the Cry of the Wolf was heard
When the moon was full
It was a sign that danger
Or death was nearby.
The Chief would call out his braves
To dance around the fire
To drive death and danger
From their village.
And even today
Some Indians fear
The Cry of the Wolf.
Design and legend by Michael Frances,
Big Cove Reserve, N. B.
Card No. 17

THE MICMAC INDIAN LEGEND
OF TALKER, THE OWL.
IN THE DAYS OF GLOOSCAP THE GOD OF THE MICMAC INDIANS, EACH OF THE BIRDS AND ANIMALS HAD A SPECIAL DUTY TO PERFORM.
TALKER, THE OWL, WOULD LISTEN PATIENTLY TO MESSAGES AND STORIES THAT WERE TOLD TO HIM. HE WOULD FLY OVER LAND AND WATER TO A DISTANT TRIBE OR LONELY HUNTER. HE WOULD REPEAT THE STORY ONLY AFTER THE QUIET OF NIGHT.
I WONDER IF THIS IS A REASON THE WHITE MAN HAS LONG CALLED HIM "THE WISE OLD OWL."
LEGEND AND DESIGN BY MICHAEL FRANCIS.
HAND PRINTED ON DEERSKIN BY MICMAC INDIAN CRAFTSMEN
BIG COVE, KENT COUNTY, N. B. CANADA

LEFT: Michael Francis, *The Cry of the Wolf,* 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, Richibucto River Historical Society, Rexton.
RIGHT: Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Talker, the Owl*, 1964, depicted on MIC silkscreened wall hanging, serigraph on deerskin, wood, 31 x 13 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

They also explored etched glass, tapestries, weaving, clay figures, metalwork, wall hangings, custom patterned English porcelain, and even a handwoven "Micmac tartan." By embracing modern designs in a semi-industrial model of production, magic was happening in the community. Working in the old schoolhouse that had been transformed into a shared studio and workshop in April 1963, dozens of Mi'kmaw men and women produced some of the most inventive and commercially successful visual art, design, and fine craft ever made in eastern Canada.

Design and Innovation at Big Cove

Crowell was so keen on the industrial potential of their weaving and fabric design that he approached the Primary Textile Institute of Canada and two large fabric printing businesses in Montreal, as well as the federal department of

Trade and Commerce for their buy-in.[13] Discussions began with the principal of the New Brunswick Teachers' College, which was in the midst of building large facilities on the UNB campus in Fredericton. They were interested in MIC tapestries based on local Indigenous legends to hang throughout the buildings.[14]

Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964, wool (handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell), 122 x 160 cm, University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton.

With this emerging visibility, a new studio and home base could not arrive soon enough. Opened in April 1963, the repurposed old Big Cove schoolhouse had a wing that doubled the original footprint, giving ample space to welcome tourists and offer the now sixteen employees room to work.[15] However, even as the MIC operation was becoming more established and orders poured in, some work disruptions began to be felt. On May 1, 1963, McKinnon wrote to the Indian Affairs Branch about artists leaving the handicraft studio to "cut potato seed in Maine," take other jobs, or simply not show up for work. There were also difficulties around meeting deadlines and working set hours. McKinnon pointed out that "handicraft (as we were doing it) did not pay as much as labor in the U.S."[16] The training and makeup of a roster of artists, along with the division of labour, were also becoming issues, although not as pressing as how to keep up with demand.

Crowell put one hundred packs of Hasti-Notes at a Fredericton outlet, and they sold out in two days. With standing orders for fifty thousand cards (many in small lots for individual shops), the MIC began refusing to take repeat orders. They simply did not have the manpower to fulfill demand. Orders were piling

up, and the lack of capital was becoming a serious challenge to order materials and pay the artists regularly. The recurring payback amounts on the federal loan were steep, affording the MIC little room to get their financial legs under them. At this point, McKinnon requested an additional loan from Indian Affairs for six or seven thousand dollars to remedy the situation, telling them "it will be money well spent."[17]

LEFT: Michael Francis, *Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People*, Series 1B, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, private collection. RIGHT: Michael Francis, *Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People*, Series 1D, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, private collection.

The MIC studio was a beehive of activity by early summer 1963 and the workers were asking for more space to allow for greater production. The sky seemed to be the limit for the Hasti-Note cards, which now featured fully integral Indigenous designs and texts. One of their most graphically inventive was The *Legend of the Tidal Bore*. On an aqua background highlighted by white bubbles and stylized water plants, a green lobster battles a black eel to return it to the Petitcodiac River, an event that created the famous tidal bore. The design was by Francis, but it has a spare compositional sophistication and dynamism that reminds one of the cut-outs of French artist Henri Matisse.

In his third quarterly report to the Indian Affairs Branch, Crowell remarked the silkscreened cards were flying off the racks so fast that they had to shut down the profitable pottery studio to make more room for the printers.[18] Demand was also growing for their woven placemats, car robes, neckties, and woodwork pieces. The studio was now running two shifts a day, six or seven days a week. A full-time clerk was needed to manage the store and corral tourists and visitors, as "workers [were] literally mobbed by fascinated questioners" during busy days.[19]

Michael Francis's artistic style was becoming more curvilinear compared to the straight-edged approach of his earlier designs. His colour palette was also evolving into a more pastel direction and less boldly contrasting. Francis was constantly inventing new designs, and his latest series of cards featured the story of the Micmac Little People. While the final designs were by Francis, MIC studio employee Jane Dedam tells a story where the inspiration for a particular card came from one of the studio workers:

> We were sitting down at my sister's house [Eva Milliea], and we were talking about all these designs, and she starts sketching and she sketched this. Anyway, she shows it to somebody at the 'craft' and they said, "Oh that's great, would make a good card." So they redesigned it.[20]

Further Hasti-Note card sets included *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Wild Goose* and *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle*. Stephen Dedam designed several series as well, including *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Shooting Star* and *A Legend of the Partridge and the Loon*. The cards and collected stories

may very well have influenced the emerging Norval Morrisseau, who in September 1963 announced he was releasing a set of illustrated Christmas cards and a "special book of Indian Legends."[21]

Stephen Dedam and Michael Francis, *A Legend of the Partridge and the Loon*, 1964, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

With an insight and understanding that was ahead of its time, Crowell and the MIC administrators developed piecework projects that the local mothers could do at home so they could work while looking after their young children. As an MIC member and young mother at the time, Jane Dedam remembered, "I was the one who did the burlap bags because, you know there were times I could go to work and there were times I had to work at the house with no sitter."[22]

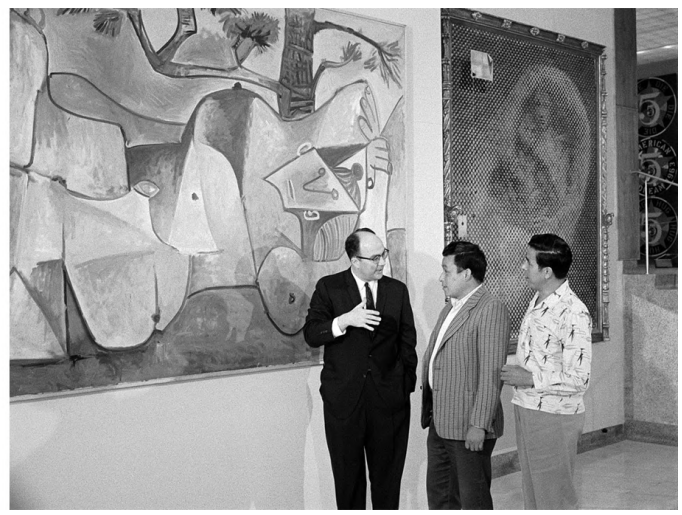
A Growing Reputation

With the MIC enjoying remarkable sales numbers, after not even a year in business, it is difficult in hindsight to understand Indian Affairs' reluctance to loosen the purse strings. The federal government did end up coming through with $8,000 to fund a second year of MIC operations, but it took effort to extract it.[23] The entire cost of the project from September 1962 to September 1963 was $10,443.71. Even translated into today's dollars, the loans to the Handicrafts Branch and the MIC were far from sizeable, yet their effect on the MIC and the local culture was immense. By mid-July 1963, payroll was around $1,000/month. Wages to the end of July 1963 were $3,070.17 for all the handicrafters. But as

always, the future was uncertain. Around late July 1963, a handwritten note by Crowell says that "only time will tell whether [the] operation can sustain itself."[24]

Media features about the Mi'kmaw artists started to appear from coast to coast, and the MIC became one of eastern Canada's major cultural bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous society. The National Film Board filmed Michael Francis and MIC co-worker Gilbert Augustine in front of a Picasso painting at Fredericton's Beaverbrook Art Gallery during the pivotal *Dunn International* art exhibition in late 1963. The *Indian News*, a nationally circulated monthly, printed an illustrated article showing Francis working on an original painting in his Fredericton studio under the title "Talented Micmac Artist." Articles on the MIC like "Handicraft Revolution Brings Prosperity to Micmac Indians" in the *Victoria Times Colonist*, "New Way of Life for Micmacs via Business" in the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, and "Legends Become Handmade $$$ for Micmac Band" in the Toronto-based *Financial Post* were becoming commonplace.

CHRISTMAS SALE
New Brunswick Craftsmen's Council
SALE OF HANDICRAFTS
BALLROOM BRUNSWICK HOTEL
FRIDAY, NOV. 22 — 10 A.M. - 9 P.M.
SATURDAY, NOV. 23 — 10 A.M. - 6 P.M.
Sponsored By Moncton Handicraft Guild
SPECIAL FEATURE
Original Designs of Indian Work on the Ancient Legend of Their People.
ADMISSION FREE — DOOR PRIZES
11-20 Sch



LEFT: Christmas Handicraft Sale ad, with special mention of the MIC, *Moncton Transcript,* November 13, 1963, p. 16. RIGHT: Still from a 1963 National Film Board recording of the *Dunn International* exhibition at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, with curator Edwy Cooke (*left*), and MIC members Gilbert Augustine (*centre*) and Michael Francis (*right*), National Film Board of Canada, Montreal.

The *Financial Post* piece was illustrated with the charmingly sophisticated silkscreen graphic of the Little People around a canoe as well as a closeup photo of Michael Francis holding a large glass vase with a goose he etched, its design based on an ancient Mi'kmaw story. The image and object show the wide reach and exploration that made Francis seem worthy of the photo's caption: "How Micmac artist Francis sparked Big Cove success."[25] "Gone," the article concluded, "are the days of earning a few dollars from souvenir birchbark canoes and teepees."

Strain Amid Success

In early June 1964, a pair of federal bureaucrats from Ottawa visited the MIC operation out of concern for the project's ability to maintain its progress and its financial health. They questioned if "branch expenditures were justified in relation to the benefits being obtained by the Indian participants."[26] The MIC was earning more, but they were never quite able to get their head above water due largely to the tight demands of the federal loan repayments.

Although the MIC's value was framed as providing desperately needed employment and wages, creating a situation where "families are earning sufficient income to reduce their reliance on assistance from welfare,"[27] some MIC employees did not get paid regularly. This understandably affected worker morale and their allegiance to schedules. Vincent Barlow recalls rarely getting paid for the work he did: "I wouldn't say I worked there, I participated. Someone was getting paid, but it wasn't us."[28] Jane Dedam claims she wasn't paid in full until several years after the operation ended. Many MIC members left for four weeks each summer, as they could make more money working in the agricultural fields of Maine. This was understandable as Big Cove had among the lowest average annual earnings per worker of any First Nations reserve in Canada during the mid-1960s ($734).[29]

Stephen Dedam, *The Micmac Legend of the Shooting Star*, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

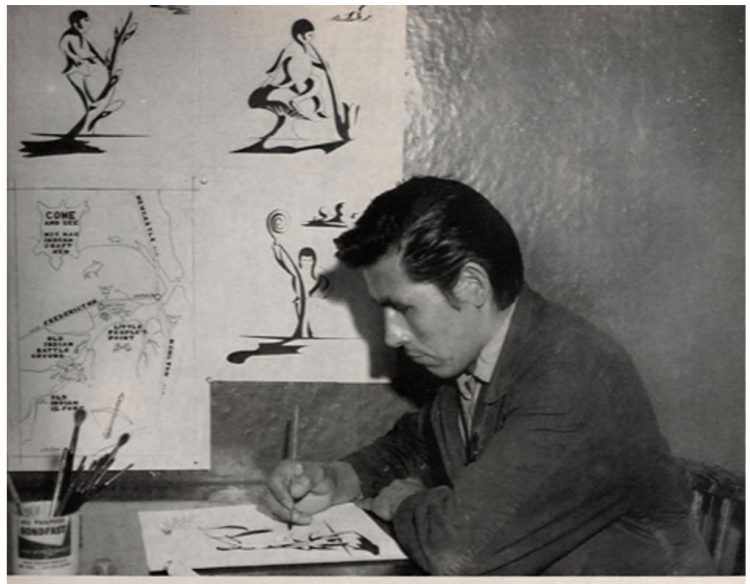
By mid-1964, problems with the MIC's management retail operations, and cashflow, among other issues, were becoming evident. The local Indian Affairs office in Chatham took the MIC's bank accounts and financial operations, completely out of local hands.[30] Ottawa still agreed to provide a further year's financial support (along with the Province of New Brunswick), stating, "Big Cove has proven to be a worthwhile undertaking"; however, the federal department made it clear that the project had to be "self-managed and operated on or before September, 1965" without further assistance.[31]

These challenges notwithstanding, there was enthusiasm for the benefits of employment, and the MIC encouraged a significant sense of pride within the community. As a June 1964 federal report states: "Provincial road signs proudly point to the location of the operation, the press has lauded the group on frequent occasions and some of the participants have been invited to address non-Indian handicraft groups elsewhere in the Province."[32] The new road signs may have seemed positive, but in fact they show the utter lack of acknowledgement the community had before it became a draw for tourism. The population of Big Cove in the early 1960s was around 700, but the reserve was not identified on the province's official road maps. This despite the fact that more than a dozen Kent County hamlets shown on these same maps had a fraction of the reserve's population. By the late 1960s, a dot with the words Big Cove finally appeared. It is no cliché to say the public visibility and draw of the MIC literally put Big Cove on the map.

Map of New Brunswick, picturing the community of Big Cove, n.d.

The spring and summer of 1964 seemed to be looking good for the MIC. They were "especially featured" at a general meeting of New Brunswick's craftspeople (about three hundred at the time) in Fredericton on April 25, 1964.[33] This year and next would also see their work featured as the cover image of both the 1964 and 1965 Blue Book of New Brunswick Craftsmen and Handicraft Shops. On-site tourist sales were up, and the July 1964 issue of the popular *Atlantic Advocate* magazine published a multi-page illustrated feature on Michael Francis, Stephen Dedam, and the MIC project. The magazine was virtually the *Time* or *Maclean's* of Atlantic Canada, and the article would have been read by tens of thousands. An enormous boost for visibility and commercial interest, it championed the quality of work by Francis, Dedam, and other co-op members, although the article's tone was latently racist and dismissive. Concurrently the Indigenous monthly, *Indian Record*, carried a shorter laudatory article that noted that, "Indian handicrafts and art, so long associated with baskets, bead and leather work, are undergoing a revolution at this Micmac settlement."[34]

Success was becoming measurable, if complex. By the end of December 1964, the workers at the MIC had silkscreened more than 300,000 Hasti-Note cards by hand in two years.[35] At a general meeting held at Big Cove on January 7, 1965, with more than forty locals present, Crowell said that fifty to sixty percent of the outlets that had purchased from the MIC had re-ordered. This was a much higher rate than the twenty percent that most other New Brunswick handicraft studios saw.[36]



Above, Stephen Dedam, a Micmac Indian of the Big Cove Reserve, making designs for his bridge-tally series which he calls "The Doings of the Little People". The titles of the designs shown in the background are "Feeding The Pussy Willows", "Smoking The Indian Pipe", and "Playing The Fiddlehead".

Micmac Indian Craftsmen

by VERA L. DAYE

ANTHONY FRANCIS, who recently had several terms as Chief of the Micmacs at Big Cove, Kent County, New Brunswick, was one of the most progressive chiefs in the Province. And because he was vitally concerned with the welfare of his people, an industrial revolution now is taking place on the Indian Reservation.

It was in 1961 that Anthony Francis approached Dr. Ivan H. Crowell, director of the handicraft branch of the New Brunswick department of Finance and Industry, with a request for help. His people had talent, he said, but lacked the knowledge to produce crafts that would fairly shout "New Brunswick Micmac Indians' handiwork" to prospective customers.

When Dr. Crowell investigated he found the Micmacs did indeed possess artistic ability. One young man, Stephen Dedam, who is presently hard at work on a series of drawings that combine the ancient Micmac legend of the Little People with his own rich humour, had sculptured an original head in red clay taken from the bank of the Richibucto river. It was the excellence of this unfired work which sparked the interest of both the Provincial and Federal authorities on Indian affairs. A fund was set up to aid them, and on October 1, 1962, Dr. Crowell began an active program of handicraft instruction on the reservation.

Construction of a new large brick school permitted conversion of the original wooden schoolhouse into a craft centre. There, classes were established in weaving, silk-screen printing, wood turning, pottery and jewellery, under the supervision of Mrs. Irene Long. A little timid in registering for classes at first, the Micmacs soon found her encouragement and enthusiasm so contagious that both men and women flocked to classes taught by top professionals.

Within six months the project was bursting at the seams. Under the energetic leadership of Anthony Francis the men banded together to move the original building to a new site. Then, using all their money from the federal winter works incentive program, the Micmacs designed and built a new wing larger than the original building. Last fall, a second wing was started for the now thriving Micmac Indian Craftsmen Centre.

The first project developed by Dr. Crowell and his staff was silk-screen

LEFT: Cover of the *Blue Book of New Brunswick Craftsmen and Handicraft Shops* featuring Michael Francis's *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose* tapestry, 1964. RIGHT: *Atlantic Advocate* magazine feature article on the MIC, July 1964.

It is interesting to note that there were still deep language and cultural barriers between the Mi'kmaq and the non-Indigenous people involved in the MIC. The minutes show that business formality wasn't the community norm, and after the meeting ended, the locals present agreed to meet among themselves and to discuss many of the proposals in their own language.

No doubt a key concern was that after two years of design, making, and invention, the MIC workers were still poorly paid. Each twelve-card set retailed for ninety cents and wholesaled for fifty, while the makers received only thirteen cents per dozen. This was not considered enough to make the work worthwhile and may perhaps have been a major factor in the MIC's declining output. At a meeting on March 8, 1965, an agreement was made to raise this amount to twenty cents per dozen. Women who had received two cents to pack each burlap bag of cards, would now earn four.[37] The rate for silk screening the burlap remained a cent per bag.

Large display of MIC items in the New Brunswick booth at the National Gift Show in Toronto, 1964, photographer unknown, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

Crafting a Place in the Public Imagination

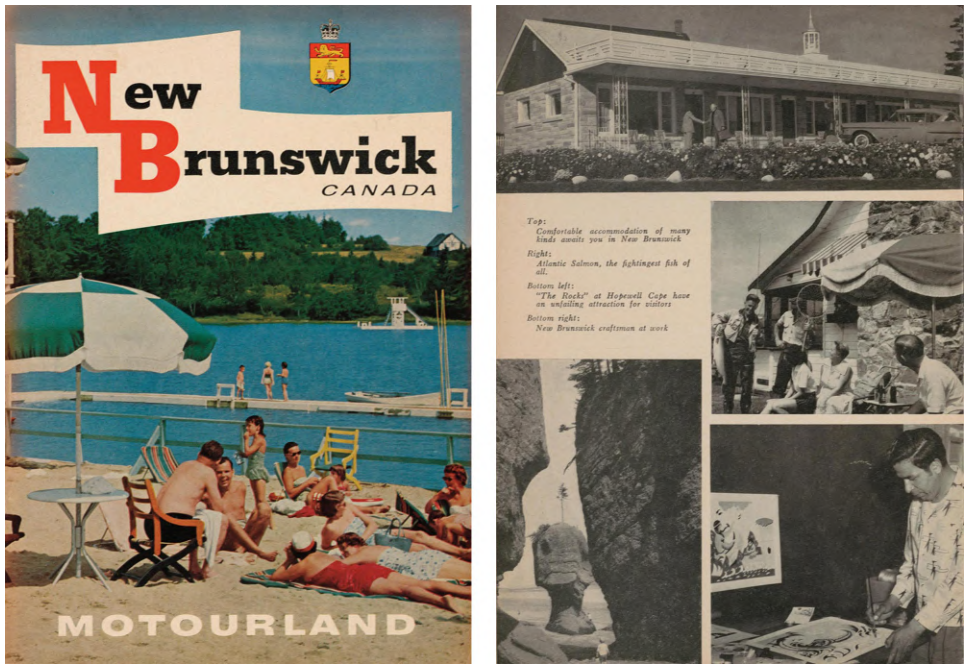
In April 1965, the federal government asked the locals if they found the project worthwhile, and whether they wanted it to continue under the supervision of the province or they were ready to take over themselves.[38] It was looking less and less likely that government support would continue.[39]

That aside, the year 1965 would see continued commercial success and media accolades. The public reception for of the tapestry series on the UNB campus was enthusiastic, with the *Daily Gleaner* announcing, "Micmac Indians Are Excellent Designers, Superb Craftsmen." The IODE again featured MIC images on their calendar, the 1966 version featuring the same images as the previous year.

The calendar wasn't the only MIC item to make it into schools. The year 1965 also saw the publication of a handsome history textbook for all of New Brunswick's Anglophone grade 5 and 6 classes titled *New Brunswick: The Story of our Province*. Published by W.J. Gage, it prominently featured the MIC. Dr. George MacBeath (director of the New Brunswick Museum) and Dorothy Chamberlin were the authors, and their illustrated volume showed a marked

shift from previous textbooks that were disdainful of Indigenous history.

By contrast, the Gage textbook featured a substantial and respectful first chapter on the social and material culture of the Algonkians, along with stories of Glooscap and a near full-page illustration by Michael Francis of the hero riding a whale. The end of the textbook featured a photograph of Francis working, the caption stating that "the artistic talents of Indians like Michael Francis on the Big Cove Micmac reserve have taken on a new purpose."[40] A mid-1960s edition of the provincial tourist guide also featured Francis working on MIC paintings. His was the only image of a craftsperson in the book. For a province that took its fine craft seriously, this was heady recognition.



LEFT: Cover of *New Brunswick, Canada: Motourland*, provincial tourism booklet, c.1964.
RIGHT: Michael Francis (*bottom right*) featured in *New Brunswick, Canada: Motourland*, provincial tourism booklet, c.1964.

National bodies were starting to pay more attention to the growing interest in "Indian crafts." The federal Department of Forestry commissioned a substantial study in 1966 with the goal of establishing a program to develop future markets.[41] This made sense on many levels. By 1963, nineteen Indigenous art/handicraft co-operatives were active across Canada, with a total annual business turnover of nearly a million dollars. What did not make sense was the federal and provincial governments' eventual abandonment of the MIC.

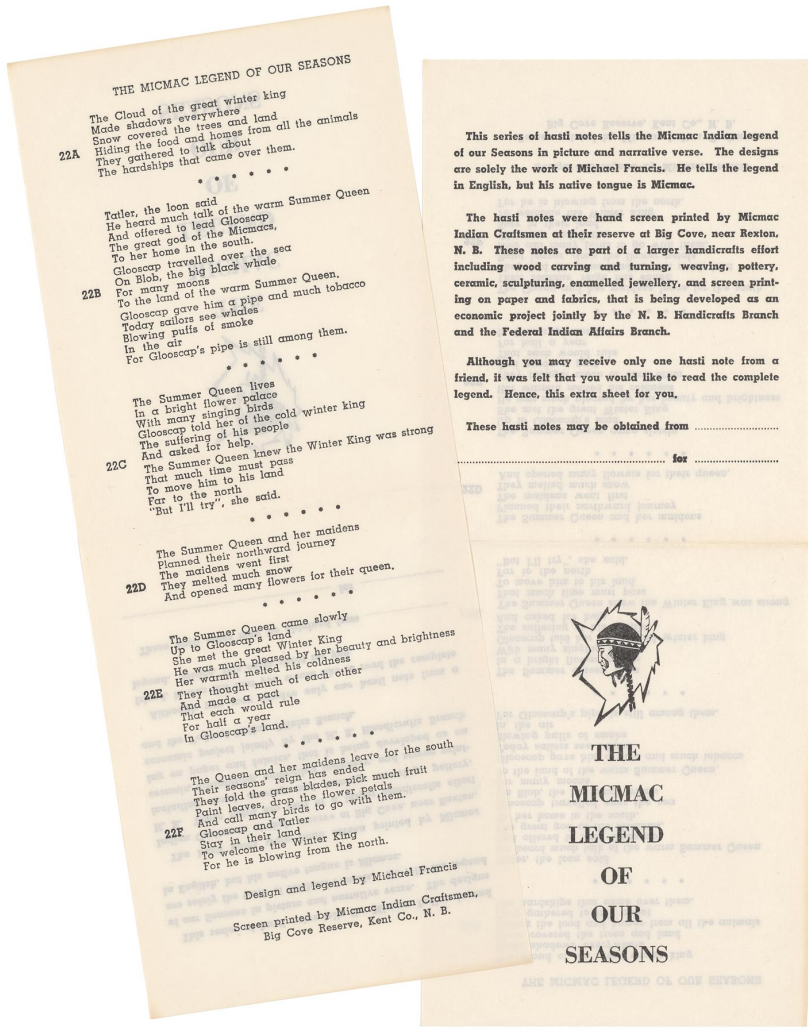
Storytelling as the Preservation of Mi'kmaw Knowledge

What captured art collectors' attention in the MIC's work (aside from the striking graphics) were the stories that accompanied each piece and the sense of community contribution to their production. Big Cove / Elsipogtog was and is home to many talented artists and storytellers, and the MIC represented more than an economic enterprise. It exemplified a moment in their history when the community worked toward a common good.[42] To the governmental bodies, perhaps the MIC represented unfulfilled economic promise. Still, for the Mi'kmaq of Big Cove / Elsipogtog, while it lasted it was a successful means of sharing knowledge. They held onto their memories, and their work contained Mi'kmaw Oral Stories, cultural histories, and knowledge of the non-humans that inhabit the land and sea.

Beyond the skilled art and designs of the MIC, the stories themselves were central to the products that came out of their studio. The stories embodied Wabanaki values and worldviews and connected to events that took place over the course of the MIC's successes and pitfalls.

At Big Cove in the 1920s and 1930s, Michael Francis grew up listening to his grandfather tell stories about "giants and reptiles and witches and the Great Spirit." It was their primary source of entertainment,[43] but these stories also carried important life lessons and teachings. They were inscriptions of our obligations, relationships, and histories on this earth.

Considering storytelling as theory and methodology, Chief David Walkem and members of Cook's Ferry Nlaka'pamux First Nation in British Columbia believe "the most important qualities of our culture are our language and our stories. In oral traditions such as ours, telling stories is how we pass on the history and the teachings of our ancestors. Without these stories, we would have to rely on other people for guidance and information about our past."[44]



THE MICMAC LEGEND OF OUR SEASONS

The Cloud of the great winter king
Made shadows everywhere
Snow covered the trees and land
22A Hiding the food and homes from all the animals
They gathered to talk about
The hardships that came over them.

Tatler, the loon said
He heard much talk of the warm Summer Queen
And offered to lead Glooscap
The great god of the Micmacs,
To her home in the south.
Glooscap travelled over the sea
22B On Blob, the big black whale
For many moons
To the land of the warm Summer Queen.
Glooscap gave him a pipe and much tobacco
Today sailors see whales
Blowing puffs of smoke
In the air
For Glooscap's pipe is still among them.

The Summer Queen lives
In a bright flower palace
With many singing birds
Glooscap told her of the cold winter king
The suffering of his people
And asked for help.
22C The Summer Queen knew the Winter King was strong
That much time must pass
To move him to his land
Far to the north
"But I'll try", she said.

The Summer Queen and her maidens
Planned their northward journey
The maidens went first
22D They melted much snow
And opened many flowers for their queen.

The Summer Queen came slowly
Up to Glooscap's land
She met the great Winter King
He was much pleased by her beauty and brightness
Her warmth melted his coldness
22E They thought much of each other
And made a pact
That each would rule
For half a year
In Glooscap's land.

The Queen and her maidens leave for the south
Their seasons' reign has ended
They told the grass blades, pick much fruit
Paint leaves, drop the flower petals
22F And call many birds to go with them.
Glooscap and Tatler
Stay in their land
To welcome the Winter King
For he is blowing from the north.

Design and legend by Michael Francis

Screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen,
Big Cove Reserve, Kent Co., N. B.

This series of hasti notes tells the Micmac Indian legend of our Seasons in picture and narrative verse. The designs are solely the work of Michael Francis. He tells the legend in English, but his native tongue is Micmac.

The hasti notes were hand screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen at their reserve at Big Cove, near Rexton, N. B. These notes are part of a larger handicrafts effort including wood carving and turning, weaving, pottery, ceramic, sculpturing, enamelled jewellery, and screen printing on paper and fabrics, that is being developed as an economic project jointly by the N. B. Handicrafts Branch and the Federal Indian Affairs Branch.

Although you may receive only one hasti note from a friend, it was felt that you would like to read the complete legend. Hence, this extra sheet for you.

These hasti notes may be obtained from .....

..... for .....

THE MICMAC LEGEND OF OUR SEASONS

The Micmac Legend of Our Seasons story leaflet by Michael Francis, 1963, private collection. These leaflets accompanied the six-card Hasti-Note set of the same name.

Storytelling is foundational learning and teaching. In oral cultures, storytelling sustains cultures and communities and their worldviews.[45] Story, says Judy Iseke, who played a key role in reviving the Michif language, validates one's personal experiences and nurtures relationships and sharing of teachings. Storytelling functions as both witnessing and remembering past events, and our engagement to the storyline allows us to learn more about ourselves. Story, like language, reveals certain aspects of our identity—teachings, lessons, warnings, how to problem solve, and how to use our imagination. She notes that colonization forces us to "remake" ourselves, and our nation's stories can aid in putting the pieces back together. In short, parts of our collective identities and histories are embedded in story.

THE MICMAC LEGEND OF THE SHOOTING STAR

In the land of Glooscap many years ago there lived two sisters who loved to watch the stars. One day when they were walking in the forest they became lost and in the evening they watched the stars as always. In two bright stars, one sister saw an Eagle and the other sister saw a hawk. These birds carried them up into heaven.

They were very lonesome, for they were away from their own people and they prayed to Glooscap to have them returned to their homes. He said, "If I do this, you must not look back once we start on our journey". But the younger sister could not resist looking back to see if her older sister were following. As she did, she was immediately turned to flame. You can see her today. Look for a shooting star, it is the younger sister still trying to come back to her people in the old land of Glooscap.

Designed by Stephen Dedam

Screen Printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove, Kent Co., N. B.

Printed in Canada

Stephen Dedam, *The Micmac Legend of the Shooting Star,* 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

In storytelling, we can become who we are meant to be. The stories we tell of who we are, where we come from, what we understand, and how we belong, what we make ourselves and our connections to our world. Through storytelling and ceremonial life, we are involved in the lifeways of a people, culture, community, family, and tradition, and in it we make a new story today of our connections. Whether our stories are pedagogical or witnessing and therefore have a teaching function, or ceremonial and have a spiritual connection, the stories are important to our cultural life.[46]

In Wabanaki cultures, like many Indigenous societies, stories and Oral Histories are in line with the truth, revealing values, teachings, and worldviews. The English words "myth" and "legend" do not bear enough weight and meaning to describe traditional stories as they are meant to be told and understood.

Unfortunately, Indigenous Peoples already bear the brunt of using English words to explain themselves within the framework of their cultures. Therefore, it is imperative to use stories as part of methods of making and study, and to honour Elders' teachings that uphold our knowledge systems.

MIC designers Michael Francis, Stephen Dedam, Michael Dedam, and Vincent Barlow ensured that future community members, Wabanaki citizens, would have access to the stories they used in their artistic depictions. Storytelling encourages a broader understanding of the self, spirit, spirit world, community, culture, relations, and identity (especially when stories are told and understood in their original language). Like language and art, story can help us rebuild or remake ourselves in ongoing colonial settings.

Michael Francis (designer), *Lightning Legend*, 1963, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell, wool on linen, 142 x 112 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

CONTINUING THE STORY

The story of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC) endures as a powerful symbol of creativity, survival, and return. What began as a local workshop in Big Cove / Elsipogtog became a cornerstone of Wabanaki artistic identity, linking tradition to modern expression. Born from resilience and collaboration, their art continues to shape how Indigenous stories are told and remembered. As Elder Stephen Dedam reflected toward the end of his life, “They didn’t destroy my mind or my soul… I’m still here.” That defiance, that creative spirit, lives on in every artist who follows.

The MIC's legacy reminds us that art is not only a means of survival but of resurgence—restoring memory, language, and belonging to a people who were never lost, only waiting to be seen again.

Dissolution

By the end of 1966, the government would pull the plug on the MIC for what, in retrospect, reads as bureaucratic impatience combined with indifference to the success the MIC had achieved with a marginal financial investment. In his 1966 Annual Report, Crowell stated: "The Indian Affairs Branch felt that the Micmac Indians had reached a stage where they could continue on their own. Also, it is their policy to help the Indian to integrate and to manage their own affairs–the step taken was in line with their established policy."[1]

The exact sequence leading to the MIC's dissolution is hard to work out, as it was more of a slow erosion than an overnight closure. Stephen Dedam was asked in 2019 about the events surrounding the end of the MIC. Although he did not recall the specifics, he did speak to it being victim to a palpable decay once the funding was cut: "There were people working on there pretty good and then all of the sudden they just start falling apart, falling apart, and just one guy was working. And finally nobody."[2]

Moncton Transcript photograph showing the local chapter of IODE selling MIC products out of a camping trailer parked next to the Trans-Canada Highway tourist bureau, July 11, 1967, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

The handicraft shop was still running in the late 1960s under the direction of the Big Cove Band Council, although its contents and sales appear to have been handled erratically. In July 1967, a Moncton chapter of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) was selling MIC products out of a camping trailer parked next to the Trans-Canada Highway tourist bureau. Proceeds were admittedly going to Big Cove's school, but the authenticity and the artisan-to-buyer connection was absent. As the MIC operations gradually fractured and fizzled out, it is astonishing how fast media and government mentions of the studio vanished. There were no newspaper or magazine mentions of the MIC after 1967, even as a model of past success. The organization didn't exist long enough to hold its place in the public memory, or for their wares to become the artistic prizes they deserved to be.

Rise of Wabanaki Modern

The MIC was a model for how the Indigenous arts in 1960s and 1970s Canada could flourish, one that created a bridge between the old and the new. As a hybrid of modern and traditional visual forms aligned with Mi'kmaw stories,

their work spoke with a voice that was tangibly creative and innovative but had a respect of tradition at its heart.

THE MICMAC INDIAN LEGEND OF THE WILD GOOSE
When birds migrated to the south in the long, long ago, they came and left by themselves. Many of the little ones were killed by storms. This caused great sorrow to Glooscap, the great God of the Micmac Indians. He asked the Wild Goose, the largest bird and the last one to leave the north each fall, to care for all of the smaller ones. The Wild Goose called all the little birds together and told them of Glooscap's wonderful plan. They agreed that the Wild Goose would lead them in their long flight to the south, shelter them in their far away homes, be with them during their journey back and protect them while they were in the North during the summer season.
Ever since the time of Glooscap the Wild Goose has been the guide and protector of all the small birds that come to our country each year.
Design and legend by Michael Francis.
Silk screen printed by Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove, Kent Co., N. B.
Card No. 25
Printed in Canada

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note 25A, 10 x 13 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

Gerald McMaster notes that "modernism became a conscious, forward-looking movement that wanted little to do with tradition, and it was characterized by always thinking in terms of the future, a tomorrow that is forever on its way." However, Indigenous artists in North America were "attempting to merge the legacy of individualism with the dynamic and affirming bond of community. They no longer see the appeal of being marginalized iconoclasts but prefer to become active participants, where community and individual growth are not incompatible but complimentary goals."[3]

The MIC were an important instance of cultural celebration in a province that had, up until the mid-1960s, rarely treated the Indigenous population with much more than disdain and ignorance. The MIC were one of the most potent tools in the Maritimes for fighting the racism and public bias that existed in 1960s

Canada. At that time, many considered Indigenous groups as remnants of the past. The MIC did not deny the cultural or ethnographic context of their art; they expanded it into the language of modernism so everyone could understand its value.

Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67, 1967, unknown photographer.

Michael Francis was asked to be a part of the Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67, which was curated by a nationwide consortium of First Nations and pulled no punches when it came to telling the story of Canada's colonization. Though Francis declined to participate, for unknown reasons, an image of him creating one of his paintings was used in an immersive passage of black and white photos of Indigenous occupations and workers that visitors walked through in the pavilion. Francis had taken part as an invited artist in the groundbreaking exhibition in Ottawa the year before that helped assemble the pavilion's contemporary art. Here, his work was featured along with that of Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007), George Clutesi (1905–1988), Francis Kagige (1929–2014), and others.[4]

In 1966, the MIC won a prestigious Canada-Design '67 Award of Excellence from the National Design Council for their Hasti-Note card sets. The awards were a major initiative supported by the Department of Industry and the National Design Council, aimed to promote Canadian-manufactured products and celebrate design excellence leading up to the Centennial year. From thousands of submissions, a select few received awards for their innovative designs and were published in the most extensive catalogue assembled up to that time of Canadian-designed products.

The elegant and modern *Canada-Design '67 Catalogue: Giftware/Cadeaux* was widely distributed, sharing the MIC Hasti-Notes and other fine craft and giftware products to domestic and international markets. The award-winning objects were displayed at Expo 67 within a Canadian Design '67 section, as well as at the Design Centre on Bloor Street West, Toronto in 1966 and 1967.

WABANAKI MODERN

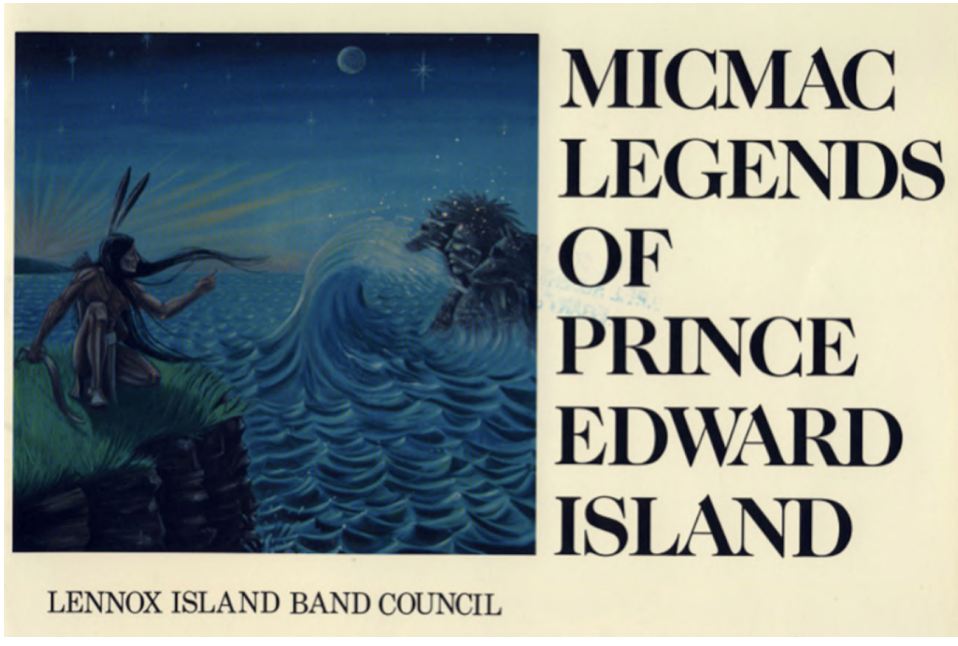
The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" by Emma Hassencahl-Perley & John Leroux

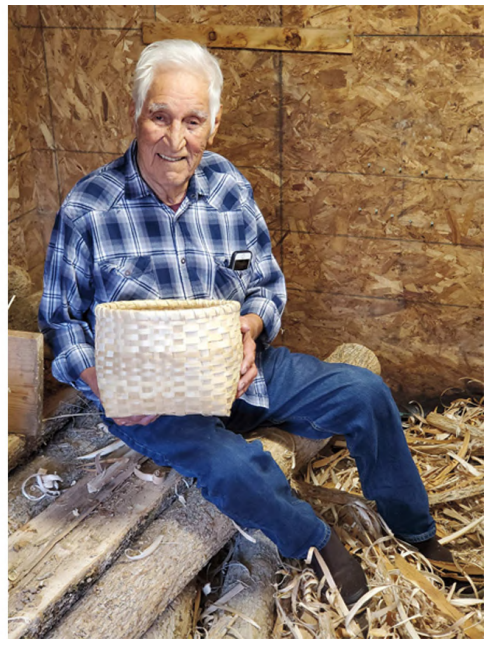
Canada–Design '67
Catalogue Giftware
Cadeaux
86
Hasti-Notes, Postcards
Approximately 24 series available including "La Belle Province", typical Quebec scenes; landscapes and paradoxes of Montreal architecture; "Man and His World", abstract landscapes and human figures with a short poem inscribed beneath. Postcards on Bristol glazed paper; notepaper, envelopes – Andorra deluxe. 5" x 7". Price on application.
Cartes-missives, cartes postales
Environ 24 séries illustrant des scènes typiques de "La belle province": paysages du Québec, les contrastes de l'architecture montréalaise. Les cartes illustrant le thème "Terre des Hommes" par des paysages abstraits, des personnages et un court poème. Cartes postales en bristol glacé. Cartes-missives et enveloppes en papier "Andorra deluxe". 5 po. x 7 po. Prix sur demande.
88
Craft Wares
Coasters, tablecloths, cushion covers, pin cushions, table runners, place mats, tote bags, etc., silk screened on drip-dry homespun, in Haida Indian, Eskimo designs. Burlap or homespun wall hangings. Hasti-note paper, packaged in burlap folders. Items individually packaged and labelled with brief design story. Various sizes. $0.89 to $6.00
Articles d'artisanat
Sous-verres, nappes, housses de coussins, coussinets à épingles, chemins de table, napperons, sacs fourre-tout, etc. Homespun vite sec; motifs Indiens Haidas et Esquimaux sérigraphiés. Tentures en homespun ou en gros canevas. Cartes-missives emballées sous grosse toile. Chaque article est empaqueté séparément avec étiquette explicative. Diverses grandeurs. $0.89 à $6.00
87
Hasti-Notes
Silk-screened designs of ancient Micmac Indian legends. Printed in three or four-colour process, with legend on back. Packaged in burlap jacket – 12 hasti-notes and envelopes (6 different designs, 2 of each.) 6 series available. 7" x 4½". $1.50 – $2.00
Cartes-missives
Illustrations en sérigraphie d'anciennes légendes des indiens Micmacs, 3 et 4 couleurs, légende au verso. Présentées sous enveloppe de gros canevas contenant 12 cartes et 12 enveloppes (6 illustrations – deux cartes de chacune). 6 séries différentes. 7 po. x 4½ po. $1.50 à $2.00
86
87
THE MICMAC INDIAN LEGEND OF THE WILD GOOSE
88
86
Manufacturer/Fabricant
Christiana Cartes d'Art, Montreal, Quebec
Designer/Esthéticien
Leoni Colangelo
87
Manufacturer/Fabricant
Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Kent County, New Brunswick
Designers/Esthéticiens
Mike Francis & Stephen Dedam
88
Manufacturer/Fabricant
Designers/Esthéticiens
Okanagan Cabin Crafts Limited, Vernon, British Columbia
43

LEFT: Cover of the *Canada–Design '67 Catalogue*, 1967. RIGHT: Interior pages of the *Canada–Design '67 Catalogue*, 1967, featuring works by the MIC.

The MIC studio burned to the ground in the early 1970s, the final blow to the co-operative studio's production. But even though the MIC was no more, Big Cove's artistic spirit manifested itself in other ways. In 1972, PEI's Lennox Island First Nation invited Michael Francis to paint a series of Glooscap murals on the walls of their Parochial House and museum. These later formed part of the illustrations for the book *Micmac Legends of Prince Edward Island* by John Joe Sark. Francis would later paint several large panels for the Big Cove band office in the late 1970s, as well as a large war memorial mural in northern Maine.

Inspired by the precedent of the MIC, a younger generation of Big Cove artists found widespread success in the 1980s and 1990s. Brothers Roger and Luke Simon both became accomplished artists recognized in Canada and the United States. Some former MIC artisans garnered accolades decades after it closed. Joe John Sanipass worked at the MIC and subsequently became one of the most respected basket makers and teachers in Elsipogtog. He won the Pioneer Award from the Tourism Industry Association of New Brunswick in 2017.





LEFT: Cover of *Micmac Legends of Prince Edward Island*, by John Joe Sark (Gynergy Books/Ragweed Press, 1988). RIGHT: Elsipogtog basketmaker and former MIC craftsman Joe John Sanipass in his workshop, 2021, photograph by John Leroux.

With the need to bring his stories to a new generation, in 1991 Michael Francis and Ontario filmmaker-ethnographer Franziska von Rosen made the film *Micmac Storyteller: River of Fire*. Recorded around Big Cove / Elsipogtog, Francis talked about his childhood and the importance of stories and recounts the tale of the Mi'kmaw Sacred Fire. That same year, artist Shirley Bear (1936–2022) affirmed in the NFB film *Kwa'nu'te': Micmac and Maliseet Artists*, "When we look at history through all time, we don't always remember the politics of people. But what we do see of history is the artwork, carvings, writings, the songs that are left… It's important for the people who are in power to start respecting that."[5]

The MIC's efforts gained national and international attention during the 1960s, while never losing sight of their communal Mi'kmaw identity. They deserve to be highlighted as historically significant and framed within the canon of Canadian visual art, fine craft, and culture. Their shaping of a Wabanaki artistic foundation at a time of rapid cultural change has been overlooked for too long, but there is little doubt that the recent wealth of successful Indigenous visual artists in Atlantic Canada—such as Ursula Johnson (b.1980), Alan Syliboy (b.1952), Jordan Bennett (b.1986), Emily Critch, Meagan Musseau (b.1990), Percy Sacobie (b.1972), Ned Bear (1954–2019), Tara Audibert, Shane Perley-Dutcher (b.1976), Francine Francis (b.1965), let alone Jeremy Dutcher (b.1990) in music—continue their legacy.

Jordan Bennett, *Histories Between and Through Time*, 2017, acrylic on wood panels, 91.2 x 198.1 x 4.2 cm, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

The Women of the MIC

The MIC narrative focuses intently on the artistic contributions of Michael Francis, Stephen Dedam, Michael Dedam, and Vincent Barlow. It would be wrong, however, not to acknowledge the women who helped make the MIC a national success story behind the scenes. Sherry Farrell Racette's iconic text *I Call Their Names in Resistance: Writing Aboriginal Women in Canadian Art History 1880–1970*, inspires critical questions, such as "Where are the women in the MIC storyline?"

Too often, recognition of Indigenous women as artists in this period becomes lost thanks to the "faceless" categories of "craft" and "ethnographic material culture" that their work falls into. Women makers are too often missing from museum labels, and their voices drowned out by men's. The MIC men became "designers" of the artwork and the public face of the art cooperative. The MIC studio women were not considered artists so much as labourers in the handicraft operation. Similarly, the efforts of Irene Long (employed by the Handicrafts Branch as the day-to-day MIC manager, instructor, and bookkeeper) go virtually unnoticed compared to Dr. Crowell's. He was frequently interviewed in the press and asked for his take on the MIC, whereas Long, who lived in the community, was relegated to a footnote.

Instead, we need to see the labour of those Mi'kmaw women in the MIC who produced those thousands of Hasti-Note cards as a form of activism and resistance to white-dominated art market spaces. Mi'kmaw women in the MIC also produced jewellery, regalia, and copperwork; pulled the silkscreen prints; and hand-made the packaging for the cards. As their work was intertwined with difficulties securing childcare, they sometimes worked from home.

Consider Jane Dedam. The sister of Eva Milliea and Michael and Stephen Dedam, and cousin to Michael Francis, she took the initial training provided after the first long-ago community meeting at Big Cove and worked for the MIC from its inception. When the MIC started, there were eleven local people

involved. She began in jewellery and copperware then moved to painting and sketching. She enjoyed the workshops and thought they were rewarding and fun. Soon, jewellery was put aside to focus on the success of the Hasti-Note cards, which Dedam helped to print. Her sister Eva and sister-in-law Elizabeth Milliea cut the stencils to produce silkscreens by hand. Then they would mix the paint for each colour on the card. Dedam says she was the one making burlap cases for each pack of cards, sewing thousands of them and silk-screening the designs. She was permitted to work on them from home so that she could take care of her children. Jane Dedam's contributions to the MIC do not go unnoticed. Her work within the MIC benefitted her community's storytelling on a national stage.

SCREEN PAINTING — Mrs. Elizabeth Milliea is pictured working on a screen painting project in the handicraft studio at the Indian reserve at Big Cove. A number of the residents of the community participate in the work, producing hasti-notes, weaving, ceramics, jewellery and wood-turning items. The handicrafts division of the New Brunswick department of finance and industry assists in the program, with the co-operation of the federal government, whose Indian Affairs Branch is responsible for reserves. (Staff photo by Bourgeois)

Elizabeth Milliea making screenprinted Hasti-Note cards at the MIC studio, *Moncton Daily Times*, February 2, 1965, 2.

LEFT: Former MIC craftsperson Jane Dedam holding the creamer and sugar bowl from the MIC's Royal Tuscan fine china set, date unknown, photograph by John Leroux. RIGHT: Teacup from *Royal Tuscan's The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People* fine china set, 1964, private collection.

An Enduring Story

The story of the MIC matters because it lives on through community members, their families, and memories. The values and worldviews embedded in the art of the MIC bring community members closer to their spirit and authentic selves. These stories are not only part of the collective identity of Elsipogtog, but all of Wabnaki'k.

Now Elders, there are still several MIC artists living in the community. Their descendants may only know pieces of this story, but knowing it in its entirety will have an impact on future generations. When Stephen Dedam was asked in a recent CBC interview what he wanted young artists to take from his art, he answered, "Pure mind and heart. That's one thing they did not destroy. They didn't destroy my mind or my soul. They tried, but I hang on to something that's mine … And I'm still here."[6]

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle*, Series 2F, 1963, silkscreened Hasti-Note card, 10 x 13 cm, Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton.

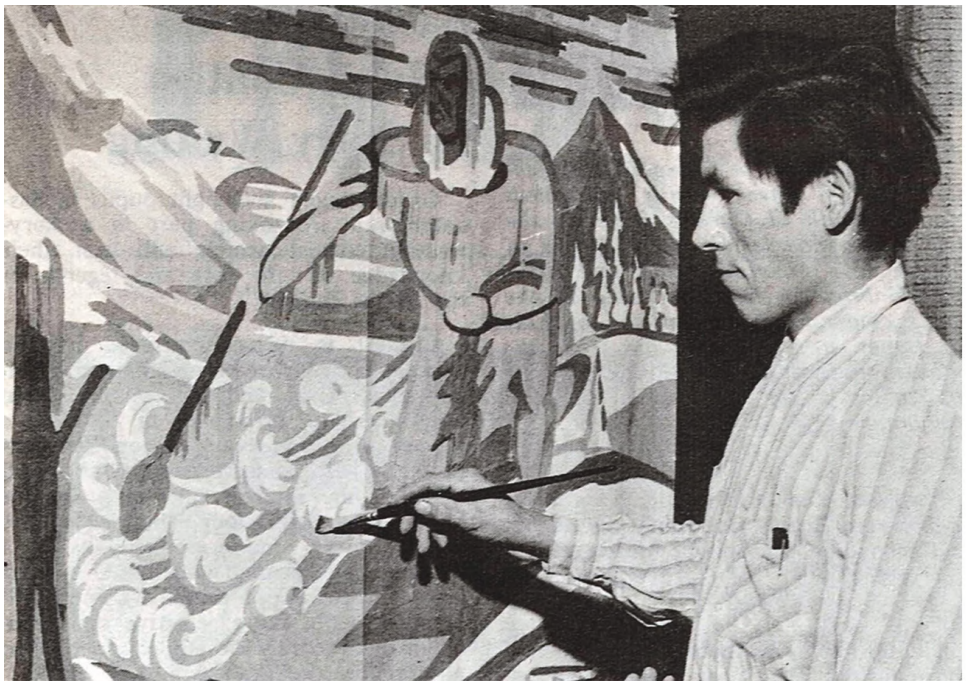
By retelling the story of the MIC artists, it will become ingrained in the art history of New Brunswick and the communal history of Elsipogtog. The national and international attention the MIC gained is an influential piece of history. Perhaps few of the MIC artists knew they would be leaving such a legacy. Most of them were simply working to make ends meet. It

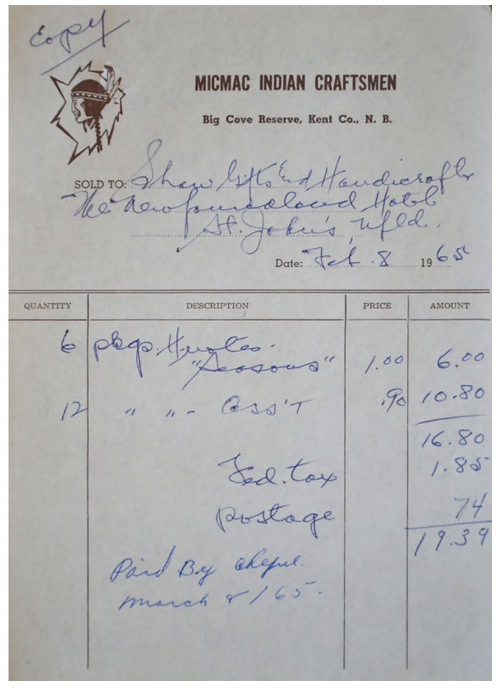
is hard not to be critical of the time in which the MIC were completing their work, because of the contradiction that Indigenous art and culture in 1960s Canada were becoming valued in the mainstream while paradoxically, Indian residential schools still existed and the Sixties Scoop was in full effect. The MIC co-operative existed, in part, as a government operation seeking to extract intellectual property and to capitalize on it. Yet that should not erase the agency of Indigenous artisans trying to make a living through art and creativity in an art world and industry that discriminated against them.[7]

Michael Francis, *Glooscap's Summer Home--Prince Edward Island*, 1963, original artwork for the IODE calendar, gouache on paper, 38 x 56 cm, New Brunswick Museum, Saint John.

SOURCES & RESOURCES

Wabanaki modernism emerged with force in the 1960s through the Micmac Indian Craftsmen (MIC), whose national visibility was followed by decades of neglect. The 2022 exhibition at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery—the first major survey of the MIC—helped restore this history to view.





MICMAC INDIAN CRAFTSMEN

Big Cove Reserve, Kent Co., N. B.

SOLD TO: Shaw Gift & Handicraft
The Newfoundland Hotel
St. John's, Nfld.

Date: Feb 8 1965

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT
6	pkgs. Hasti-Note "Dessous"	1.00	6.00
12	" " - Ass't	.90	10.80
			16.80
	Fed. tax		1.85
	Postage		74
			19.39

Paid By cheque
March 4/65

LEFT: Stephen Dedam, 1962, from the *Indian News*, April 1962, 7. RIGHT: MIC invoice for Hasti-Note card sets sent to the Newfoundland Hotel gift shop, St. John's, 1965, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa.

Members of the MIC

Many men, women, and youth contributed their time, skill, and dedication to the Micmac Indian Craftsmen. This list of members was compiled from archival documents such as employee records, pay sheets, and recollections by Jane Alice Dedam. The authors have done their utmost to compile a comprehensive list and apologize in advance for any omissions. Please let us know if you notice any omissions. We will be happy to correct them.

Anthony Augustine
David Augustine
Doris Augustine
Frank Augustine
Gilbert Augustine
John Augustine
Kenneth Augustine
Leo Augustine
Lillian Augustine
Mary (Mrs. Norman) Augustine
Norman Augustine
Sam Augustine
Stella Augustine
Stephen Augustine
Theresa (Mrs. Leo J.) Augustine
Vincent Augustine
Mary Barlow
Vincent Barlow
George Clair
John H. Clair
K. Clair
Stephen Clair
Alfred Clement

Issac Clement
Lucy Clement
Peter Tom Clement
Susie Clement
Raymond Coppage
Jane Alice (Simon) Dedam
Michael Dedam
Stephen Dedam
Cecilia Francis
Edward Francis
Louis F. Francis
Louise (Mrs. Anthony) Francis
Mary (Mrs. Martin) Francis
Michael Francis
Syrena Francis
Vincent Francis
Mrs. Louis Joseph
Peter Joseph
Stephen Joseph
Claudia Levy
Doris Levy
Jane Levy
Marion (Mrs. Peter) Levy
Peter Levy
Philomene (Mrs. Albert) Levy
Barbara Milliea
Elizabeth Milliea
Eva Milliea
Lucy Milliea
Mildred Milliea
Rose (Mrs. Levi) Milliea
Sally (Mrs. Anthony) Milliea
Annie (Mrs. Henry) Peter Paul
Judy (Mrs. Tom) Peter Paul
Tom Peter Paul
Veronica Paul
Albert Peters
Andrew Peters
Angeliqua (Mrs. Henry) Sanipass
Esther Sanipass
Herbert Sanipass
Joe John Sanipass
Arthur Simon
Celina Simon
Doris Augustine Simon
Isabel Simon
Jesse Simon
Joe Simon
L. Simon
Lena Simon
Mary Louise Simon

WABANAKI MODERN

The Artistic Legacy of the 1960s "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" by Emma Hassencahl-Perley & John Leroux

Regina Simon
Tom Simon
W. J. Simon
Levi Sock

***Wabanaki Modern* Documentary**

A short documentary directed by Clem McIntosh and produced by Sandy Hunter, *Wabanaki Modern* explores the Micmac Indian Craftsmen collective of 1960s New Brunswick. Created as a companion to the 2022 exhibition at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, it examines the movement's legacy and its lasting impact on contemporary Indigenous art.

Learn more about the *Wabanaki Modern* documentary and watch it for free on CBC Gem: https://cazador.ca/wabanaki-modern/

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The authors wish to recognize the many men, women, and youth who contributed their time, skill, and dedication to the Micmac Indian Craftsmen during the 1960s.

IMAGE SOURCES

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Credits for Cover Images

Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons–Glooscap, Tatler the Loon, and the Summer Queen*, 1963. (See below for details.)

Royal Tuscan, *The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People* fine china set, 1964. (See below for details.)

Credits for Banner Images

Foreword: Michael Francis, *Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People*, Series 1F, 1963. (See below for details.)

History of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen: Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964. (See below for details.)

Key Works: Michael Francis (design), *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose*, 1964. (See below for details.)

Recognition & Reach: Michael Francis, *Glooscap's Summer Home—Prince Edward Island*, 1963. (See below for details.)

Continuing the Story: Michael Francis, *The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons–Glooscap, Tatler the Loon, and the Summer Queen*, 1963. (See below for details.)

Sources & Resources: Large display of MIC items in the New Brunswick booth at the National Gift Show in Toronto, 1964. (See below for details.)

Copyright & Credits: Michael Francis, *The Micmac Legend of Our Seasons—the Summer Queen Meets the Winter King*, 1963. (See below for details.)

Credits for Works and Photographs

Ancient Mi'kmaw petroglyphs at Kejimkujik National Park, Nova Scotia. Photograph by Parks Canada. Courtesy of Parks Canada.

Atlantic Advocate magazine feature article on the MIC, July 1964. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Back of the *Micmac Legends of the Little People tapestry*, 1965, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick.

Basket, c.2014, by Sandra Racine. Courtesy of the artist.

Cards from the initial set of MIC silkscreened Hasti-Note cards, designed by non-Indigenous instructors from the provincial Handicrafts Branch, 1962. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB MC1254-MS4-E). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

CHRISTMAS SALE
New Brunswick Craftsmen's Council
SALE OF HANDICRAFTS
BALLROOM BRUNSWICK HOTEL
SATURDAY, NOV. 23 — 10 A.M. • 17 P.M.
Sponsored By Moncton Handicraft Guild
SPECIAL FEATURE
Original Designs of Indian Wars on the Ancient Legend of Their People.
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Christmas Handicraft Sale ad, with special mention of the MIC, *Moncton Transcript*, November 13, 1963, p. 16. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

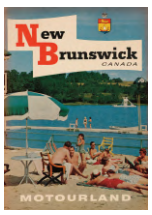
Cover of the *Blue Book of New Brunswick Craftsmen and Handicraft Shops,* featuring Michael Francis's *Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose* tapestry, 1964. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Cover of the *Canada-Design '67 Catalogue*, 1976. Courtesy of John Leroux.

Cover of IODE's 1965 C*anadian Indian Legends* calendar, with designs by Michael Francis and Stephen Dedam. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Cover of the MIC catalogue, 1964, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P340-128). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Cover of *Micmac Legends of Prince Edward Island*, by John Joe Sark (Gynergy Books/Ragweed Press, 1988). Courtesy of AbeBooks.



Cover of *New Brunswick, Canada: Motourland*, provincial tourism booklet, c.1964. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

The Cry of the Wolf, 1963, by Michael Francis. Richibucto River Historical Society, Rexton, NB. Courtesy of the Richibucto River Historical Society. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Dancing Bird, 1967, by Lucy Qinnuayuaq. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton, gift of Mrs. A. Murray Vaughan (1978.18). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery.

Elizabeth Milliea making screenprinted Hasti-Note cards at the MIC studio, *Moncton Daily Times*, February 2, 1965, 2. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Elsipogtog basketmaker and former MIC craftsman Joe John Sanipass in his workshop, 2021. Photograph by John Leroux. Courtesy of John Leroux.

Former MIC craftsperson Jane Dedam holding the creamer and sugar bowl from the MIC's Royal Tuscan fine china set, date unknown. Photograph by John Leroux. Courtesy of John Leroux.

Glooscap's Summer Home–Prince Edward Island, 1963, by Michael Francis. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John (NBM 1980.62.7.2). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Histories Between and Through Time, 2017, by Jordan Bennett. Collection of the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, purchased 2021 (49199.1-3). Courtesy of the National Gallery of Canada. © Jordan Bennett. Photo credit: NGC.

How Glooscap Formed the Birds–New Brunswick, 1963, by Michael Francis. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John (NBM 1980.62.10.2). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Illustration of Hopi, Zuni, and Navajo blankets, reproduced in the *New International Encyclopedia* (New York City: Dodd Mea, aqq Company, 1902). Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Indians of Canada pavilion at Expo 67, 1967. Photographer unknown.

Indigenous basket weaver sitting beside a stack of baskets, 1951. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton. Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Interior pages of the *Canada-Design '67 Catalogue*, 1976. Courtesy of John Leroux.

Large clay head by Stephen Dedam, c.1961. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P340-134). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Large display of MIC items in the New Brunswick booth at the National Gift Show in Toronto, 1964. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P340-074). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

The Legend of Glooscap's Departure, 1963, by Michael Francis. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB MC1254-MS4-E). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

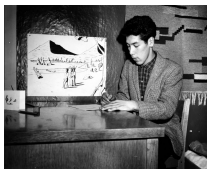
The Legend of Kingfisher, 1965, by Stephen Dedam. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John (1966.85). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

A Legend of the Partridge and the Loon, 1964, by Stephen Dedam and Michael Francis. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John (1995.27.90.6). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Legend of the Tidal Bore, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.04). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

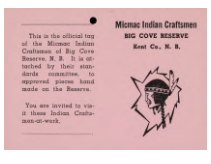
Lightning Legend, 1963, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick Craft Collection (1995.27.57.13). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Map of New Brunswick, picturing the community of Big Cove, n.d. Courtesy of John Leroux.



MIC artist Vincent Barlow with one of his ink on paper works, 1962. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P340-59). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

MIC invoice for Hasti-Note card sets sent to the Newfoundland Hotel gift shop, St. John's, 1965. Collection of Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (LAC RG10-9034). Courtesy of Library and Archives Canada.



MIC logo and product tag by Stephen Dedam, 1962. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

MIC silkscreened image of Glooscap riding a whale from the school textbook *New Brunswick: The Story of our Province* (W.J. Gage, 1965). Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle, Series 2A, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.24). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle, Series 2D, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.04). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Turtle, Series 2F, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.20). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Wild Goose, 25A, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.05). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Wild Goose, 25B, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.07). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of the Wild Goose, 25E, 1963, by Michael Francis. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.06). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People fine china set, 1964, by Royal Tuscan. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Micmac Legends of the Little People, 1964, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People, Series 1A, 1963, by Michael Francis. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People, Series 1B, 1963, by Michael Francis. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People, Series 1D, 1963, by Michael Francis. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

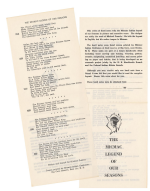
Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People, Series 1F, 1963, by Michael Francis. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons, 1963, by Michael Francis. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons, 22F, 1963, by Michael Francis. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons–Glooscap, Tatler the Loon, and the Summer Queen, 1963, by Michael Francis. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB, P261-45). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Talker, the Owl, 1964, by Michael Francis. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick Craft Collection (1995.27.90.1.3). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Indian Legend of Tatler–the Loon, 1964, by Michael Francis. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, New Brunswick Craft Collection (1995.27.90.1.1). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Legend of Our Seasons story leaflet by Michael Francis, 1963. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

The Micmac Legend of Our Seasons–the Summer Queen Meets the Winter King, 1963, by Michael Francis. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB, P261-43). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Legend of the Shooting Star, 1963, by Stephen Dedam. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.13). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Legend of the Shooting Star, 1963, by Stephen Dedam. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.14). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

The Micmac Legend of the Shooting Star, 1963, by Stephen Dedam. Beaverbrook Art Gallery, Fredericton (2020.15). Courtesy of the Beaverbrook Art Gallery. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose, 1964, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose, 1964, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

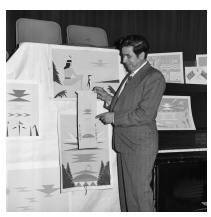
Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose, 1964, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose, 1964, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose, 1965, design by Michael Francis, handwoven by Ivan H. Crowell. University of New Brunswick Mi'kmaq-Wolastoqey Centre Collection, Fredericton. Courtesy of the University of New Brunswick. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Michael Francis (*left*) and Ivan H. Crowell (*right*) holding an artwork from Francis's *Micmac Legends of the Little People* series, 1963. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P14-2-6918). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Michael Francis (*bottom right*) featured in *New Brunswick, Canada: Motourland*, provincial tourism booklet, c.1964. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.



Michael Francis presenting a number of his MIC artworks at a New Brunswick Craftsmen's Council exhibition in Moncton, 1963. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P115-5820). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Miniature Mi'kmaw souvenir canoe, c.1880. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Moncton Transcript photograph showing the local chapter of IODE selling MIC products out of a camping trailer parked next to the Trans-Canada Highway tourist bureau, July 11, 1967. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P115-12202). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Moose Dream Legend, 1962, by Norval Morrisseau. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, gift of Procter and Gamble Co. of Canada, Ltd., 1964 (no. 63/ 54). Courtesy of the Art Gallery of Ontario. Photo credit: AGO. © Estate of Norval Morrisseau.

Navajo double saddle blanket, c.1900. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

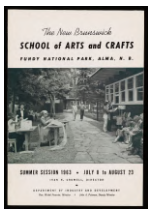
The Rainbow of Lake Louise—Stoney Indian Legend—Alberta, Kisikwekewiku's, 1964–65, by Michael Francis. Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire Calendar. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Small clay figures by Stephen Dedam, c.1961. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P340-135). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Spread from the MIC catalogue, 1964, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P340-128). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Stephen Dedam, 1962, from the *Indian News*, April 1962, 7. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Still from a 1963 National Film Board recording of the *Dunn International* exhibition at the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, with curator Edwy Cooke (*left*), and MIC members Gilbert Augustine (*centre*) and Michael Francis (*right*). National Film Board of Canada, Montreal (41001_04042312).



Summer session brochure for the New Brunswick School of Arts and Crafts at Fundy National Park, 1963. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB RS739C-1963). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

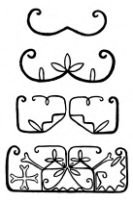
Teacup from *The Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People* fine china set, 1964, by Royal Tuscan. Private collection. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Typical hand-sewn and silkscreen burlap package for the MIC Hasti-Notes card sets, date unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB MC1254-MS4-E). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

View of Big Cove / Elsipogtog in 1965. Photographer unknown. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton (PANB P115-8305). Courtesy of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.

Wabanaki beaded coat with double-curve pattern, c.1825. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, Mary Kearny Odell Bequest (30116). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum.

Wabanaki beaded purse, c.1875. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, gift of Alice Gertrude Grimmer (1950-85). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum.



The Wabanaki decorative motive: the Double Curve, reproduced in *The Double Curve Motive in Northeastern Algonkian Art*, by Frank G. Speck (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914), 21. Courtesy of Goose Lane Editions.

Where the Caribou Go–Northwest Territories, 1963, by Michael Francis. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John (NBM 1980.62.2.2). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum. © Elsipogtog First Nation.

Wolastoqiyik etched birchbark box with double-curve pattern, c.1850, by Sarah Sacobie. New Brunswick Museum, Saint John, gift of Stella Gunter (10877). Courtesy of the New Brunswick Museum.

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NOTES

History of the Micmac Indian Craftsmen

1. See Marcia Violet Crosby, "Indian Art/Aboriginal Title," master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1994, 66.

2. Vincent Massey and Canada, *Report: Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences 1949–1951* (King's Printer, 1951), 239–43.

3. Ivan H. Crowell, "Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove Reserve, Kent Co., N.B.," May 25, 1964, 1. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB) RS416 1964 132.

4. Ivan H. Crowell, handwritten notes for the "Micmac Indian Craftsmen" report, mid-1963, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

5. Meeting Minutes, "Extract from the minutes of a meeting of the Treasury Board, held at Ottawa," April 19, 1962. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

6. Meeting Minutes, "Minutes of the Big Cove Council Meeting," June 26, 1962. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

7. Meeting Minutes, "Minutes of the Big Cove Council Meeting," June 26, 1962.

8. Ivan H. Crowell, *Special Interim Report—Big Cove Indian Handicrafts Project, December 14, 1962*, 1962, 1. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

9. "Handicrafts—Big Cove—Notes on Meeting with Mr. Crowell," December 5, 1962. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

10. Crowell, *Special Interim Report*, 1.

11. Gerald McMaster, "Tenuous Lines of Descent: Indian Arts and Crafts of the Reservation Period," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* (1989): 208.

12. In the 1940s and 1950s, the Canadian government implemented social programs to address the extreme poverty and cultural displacement experienced by Inuit communities in the Arctic, many of whom had been forced to give up their traditionally nomadic lifestyles. One of the most widely successful programs was developed by James Houston, an artist and civil administrator credited with establishing the West Baffin Island Co-operative (today known as Kinngait Studios), an organization driving the production and sale of prints, drawings, and carvings by Inuit makers. For more about the establishment of the West Baffin Island Co-operative, see Kristen K. Potter, ' James Houston, Armchair Tourism, and the Marketing of Inuit Art', in *Native*

American Art in the Twentieth Century, edited by W. Jackson Rushing (Routledge, 1999), 39–56.

13. Jas M. Morgan, "Stories Not Told," *Canadian Art*, May 6, 2019, http://canadianart.ca/essays/stories-not-told-annie-pootoogook/.

14. Vera L. Daye, "Micmac Indian Craftsmen," *Atlantic Advocate*, July 1964.

15. McMaster, "Tenuous Lines."

16. McMaster, "Tenuous Lines," 205–36.

17. McMaster, "Tenuous Lines," 205–36.

18. Larry Shiner, "'Primitive Flakes,' 'Tourist Art,' and the Ideology of Authenticity," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 52, no. 2 (1994): 225–34.

Key Works: The Micmac Indian Legend of Our Seasons

1. Though it relates to early forms of collation and strategic alliance against imperial expansion in North America, the Pan-Indian movement (also referred to as the "Red Power" movement) emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. The movement was political and philosophical in nature, shaped by collective action among Indigenous Peoples to reassert their sovereignty and land rights, resist cultural assimilation, and promote unity and cooperation among Indigenous nations. Hazel Hertzberg's book *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (1971) is an important early study examining the historic evolution of Pan-Indian movements in the United States. See also Sydney Ann Beckmann, "Pan-Indianism and Authenti(city): Refusing Colonial Borders," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 48, no. 2 (2025), https://doi.org/10.17953/A3.6553.

2. Ivan H. Crowell, *Special Interim Report—Big Cove Indian Handicrafts Project, December 14, 1962*, 1962, 1. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

3. Crowell, *Special Interim Report*, 1.

Key Works: Micmac Indian Legends of the Little People

1. Erin Pottle, "Mi'kmaq interpreter sharing stories, legends in the Cape Breton Highlands," *Cape Breton Post*, August 2, 2019.

2. See Pat Paul's descriptions in "Little People Geow-lud-mo-sis-eg," Native American Indian Resources, last updated June 19, 1996, http://www.kstrom.net/isk/stories/patpaul.html.

3. Pottle, "Mi'kmaq interpreter sharing stories."

4. Ruth Whitehead, *The Micmac Ethnology Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum*, Curatorial Report Number 25, Nova Scotia Museum, 1974.

Key Works: The Legend of the Tidal Bore
1. Michael Francis, *The Legend of the Tidal Bore*, Hasti-Note card, screen printed by the Micmac Indian Craftsmen Card No. 33.

2. Kerry Prosper and Mary Jane Paulette, *The Mi'kmwaq Relationship with Kat (American Eel)* (Social Research for Sustainable Fisheries/Paqtnkek Fish and Wildlife Commission, March 2002), http://people.sfx.ca/rsg/srsf/researchreports1/FactSheets/FactSheet7.pdf.

Key Works: "Canadian Indian Legends," Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire Calendar
1. The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE) is a women's patriotic organization that exerted significant influence on Canadian education, philanthropy, and cultural life throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Through its national network of local chapters, IODE funded scholarships, libraries, and resources for classrooms across Canada and in other British Commonwealth countries. For more on the history of IODE, see "Our History," IODE, accessed January 22, 2026, https://www.iode.ca/our-history.html.

2. Reginae M. Tait, "Let's Keep a Date: A New IODE Calendar for 1965," *Echoes* 245 (Spring 1964): 30.

3. Reginae M. Tait, IODE, to R. F. Battle, Director of Indian Affairs, Ottawa, October 8, 1964. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

4. R.F. Battle, Indian Affairs, Ottawa, to R. M. Tait, IODE, October 20, 1964. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

5. R.F. Battle, Indian Affairs, Ottawa, to F. B. McKinnon, October 20, 1964. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

6. Battle to Tait, October 20, 1964.

7. Louis J. Robichaud to Mrs. George E. Tait, IODE, October 21, 1964. Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton, RS416.1964.132.

Key Works: Micmac Legend of the Wild Goose (Tapestry Suite)
1. Ivan H. Crowell to F.B. McKinnon, March 24, 1964. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

2. Ivan H. Crowell, *Special Interim Report—Big Cove Indian Handicrafts Project, December 14, 1962*, 1962, 1. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

Key Works: Micmac Legends of the Little People (Tapestry)
1. "Indian Tapestry is Featured at College," *Moncton Daily Times*, March 20, 1965, 3.

Recognition & Reach

1. Ivan H. Crowell, *Special Interim Report—Big Cove Indian Handicrafts Project, December 14, 1962*, 1962, 1. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

2. Crowell, *Special Interim Report*, 1.

3. Interview with Vincent Barlow, John Leroux, and Emma Hassencahl-Perley, April 8, 2020.

4. F.B. McKinnon to Chief, Economic Division, Ottawa, "Handicraft Project—Big Cove Reserve, January 30, 1963," 2. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

5. F.B. McKinnon to Chief, Economic Division, Ottawa.

6. Crowell, *Special Interim Report*, 2.

7. F.B. McKinnon to Chief, Economic Division, Indian Affairs, "Handicraft—Big Cove Reserve, February 9, 1963," 1. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

8. Ivan H. Crowell, "Micmac Indian Craftsmen, Big Cove Reserve, Kent Co., N.B.," May 25, 1964, 2. Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa: Ref RG10, vol/box number 8815, file 271/14-1. Copied container number C-9725.

9. Interview with Vincent Barlow.

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Continuing the Story

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GLOSSARY

BIPOC
An acronym for Black, Indigenous, People of Colour, the term is applied in North American contexts to centre the experiences of these groups, to recognize that they are impacted by systemic racism, and to demonstrate solidarity among them. The introduction of the term has been traced to 2013 but it has become more widely used since the 2020 racial justice uprisings in response to police brutality.

Brittain, Miller (Canadian, 1912–1968)
Brittain first trained with Elizabeth Russell Holt, a central figure of the arts scene in Saint John, New Brunswick, before studying at the Art Students League of New York from 1930 to 1932. His drawings, paintings, watercolours, and murals reveal an enduring interest in social realism and psychology. Brittain was a founding member of the Federation of Canadian Artists.

Colville, Alex (Canadian, 1920–2013)
A painter, muralist, draftsman, and engraver whose highly representational images verge on the surreal. Colville's paintings typically depict everyday scenes of rural Canadian life imbued with an uneasy quality. Since his process was meticulous—the paint applied dot by dot—he produced only three or four paintings or serigraphs per year. (See *Alex Colville: Life & Work* by Ray Cronin.)

Harris, Lawren P. (Canadian, 1910–1994)
The eldest son of Lawren S. Harris of the Group of Seven, Lawren P. Harris was best known as a landscape and, later, abstract painter. As an official war artist during the Second World War he documented the Italian front. From 1946 to 1975 he was the director of the School of Fine and Applied Arts at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, where he worked to popularize modern art in the Maritimes.

Humphrey, Jack (Canadian, 1901–1967)
Known for his modernist cityscapes and harbour scenes, Humphrey was a painter, draughtsman, and watercolourist based in Saint John, New Brunswick. He was a member of various groups dedicated to promoting modern art in Canada, including the Canadian Group of Painters. Along with Miller Brittain, he was one of two non-Québécois artists who belonged to Montreal's Contemporary Art Society in the 1940s.

La Guilde
Alice Peck and Mary Martha (May) Phillips founded the Canadian Handicrafts Guild in Montreal in 1906 to promote craft production in Canada. Inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, the guild held annual exhibitions at the Art Gallery of Montreal. By the 1950s the professionalization and elevation of Canadian craft to the level of art had become a major focus of its activities. The guild provided financial support to James Houston to make test purchases of Inuit art, culminating in the notable sale at the CHG's Montreal shop in November 1949 that launched recognition of Inuit art in southern markets. The organization later changed its name to the Canadian Guild of Crafts, and it is now called simply La Guilde.

modernism
A movement extending from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century across artistic disciplines, modernism rejected academic traditions in favour of innovative styles developed in response to contemporary industrialized society. Modernist movements in the visual arts have included Gustave Courbet's Realism, and later Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, and on to abstraction. By the 1960s, anti-authoritarian postmodernist styles such as Pop art, Conceptual art, and Neo-Expressionism blurred the distinction between high art and mass culture.

Morrisseau, Norval (Anishinaabe, 1931–2007)
A painter known for depicting Anishinaabe legends and personal, hybrid spiritual themes with vibrant colours and strong lines, Morrisseau was a crucial figure in introducing contemporary Indigenous art into the wider Canadian art scene. He founded the Woodland School and inspired a generation of younger First Nations artists. In 1978, Morrisseau was appointed to the Order of Canada, and in 2006 the National Gallery mounted a major retrospective of his work. (See *Norval Morrisseau: Life & Work* by Carmen Robertson.)

Pratt, Christopher (Canadian, 1935–2022)
A renowned Newfoundland painter and printmaker whose work is characterized by precision, flatness, intense focus on a single subject, and an almost artificial sense of light. His pictures of ordinary local scenes and figures have an otherworldly quality. He designed the provincial flag of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1980.

Pratt, Mary (Canadian, 1935–2018)
One of Canada's most prominent artists, whose use of light in particular transforms quotidian objects and moments into deeply meaningful subjects. Pratt's style developed in response to the demands on her time as the mother of four children; unable to paint scenes that struck her in the moment, she began recording them with a camera for later use. (See *Mary Pratt: Life & Work* by Ray Cronin.)

Turtle Island
Used to refer to the lands that we now know as the Americas, the term comes from Indigenous creation stories, such as those held by the Ojibwe, which tell of the earth as being formed on the shell of a large turtle.